

by the same author

HISTORY OF NIGERIA
COLOUR PREJUDICE

COLONIAL CIVIL SERVANT

by

SIR ALAN BURNS

G.C.M.G.

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FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1949

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2937

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
IN 12 POINT BEMBO TYPE
BY THE BLACKFRIARS PRESS LTD
LEICESTER

To
The Colonial Civil Service

"But to-day I leave the galley. Shall I curse her service then?
God be thanked—whate'er comes after, I have lived and toiled with Men!"

The Galley-Slave, KIPLING

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CHAPTER I

LEEWARD ISLANDS

I WAS practically born into the Colonial Civil Service. My grandfather and my father were both members of that Service, and most of my childhood was spent in the colonies, where many of my father's friends were also civil servants. My father's sister was married to a colonial judge. I cannot remember ever having thought seriously of any other possible career. With all its drawbacks, it offers great possibilities to a young man for a pleasant life and a useful one and if I had the chance to begin again I do not think I should choose any other. I realise that I have been more fortunate than the majority of my colleagues, chiefly because I have been blessed with good health, and that the prizes of the Civil Service go to very few, but notwithstanding this I still believe that the Colonial Service offers a great deal that is worth while to those who are prepared to face discomfort and the possibility of prolonged separation from home and family.

My grandfather, Patrick Burns, who came from St. Andrews, was appointed Auditor of Antigua in 1870, and Auditor-General of the Leeward Islands in 1872 ; it is interesting to see, from an old Colonial Office List, that his salary in the latter post was £800 a year. He acted several times as Colonial Secretary of the Leeward Islands and as President* of the various islands of the group ; he was also a member of the Executive and Legislative Councils of the Colony. He died in 1887. I was told by an old lady who kept a boarding house in Dominica, where my grandfather once stayed, that he slept peacefully for several hours one night during a hurricane, although the others in the house had sat up waiting, in some anxiety, to see what would happen. At last it was decided to waken him, and he was told that the barometer was still falling and the force of the wind increasing ; replying that he could do nothing about it, and that he wished to keep fresh for the work that lay ahead, he calmly went to sleep again. I have remembered this story in times of panic.

* Afterwards styled Administrator.

My father, James Burns, also served in the Leeward Islands, and died in 1896, at the early age of 44, as Treasurer of St. Kitts-Nevis.* Young as I was at the time, I was much impressed by the obvious sorrow shown by the members of the Treasury staff at his funeral. Many years later, when I joined the St. Kitts Club, the first thing I noticed as I entered the reading room of the Club was a large photograph of my father, who had been a popular member. When I joined the Colonial Service I received many kindnesses from men who had served under my father and grandfather; I have no doubt that many of my shortcomings were overlooked for their sakes.

I was born in 1887 in Basseterre, the chief town of St. Kitts. When I was twelve years of age I went to St. Edmund's College, the oldest Catholic school in England, and was there for a few years, but as the family fortunes had been at a very low ebb ever since my father's death, it was necessary for me to begin work very young. (Members of the Colonial Civil Service generally die poor, which is a proof of their honesty, if not of their providence.) An elder brother, R. E. Burns, who retired in 1929 as Deputy Treasurer of the Gold Coast, had already obtained a post in the Leeward Islands Civil Service, and I was appointed to the Treasury and Customs Department of St. Kitts-Nevis on the 15th February, 1905; I was then 17.

The federal colony of the Leeward Islands, situated on the north-eastern curve of the chain of West Indian islands, consisted in 1905 of the Presidencies of Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis, Dominica, Montserrat, and the Virgin Islands. The Governor of the colony had his headquarters in Antigua, and each of the Presidencies was under the immediate control of an Administrator or a Commissioner, responsible to the Governor. Each Presidency had its own Executive Council and (except for the Virgin Islands) Legislative Council, besides the Federal Executive Council and the General Legislative Council for the whole Colony. Thus in the Leeward Islands, the total population of which did not exceed 140,000, there were no less than six Executive Councils and five Legislatures.† This apparently absurd arrangement, which still exists (except that Dominica has now

* The official name of this Presidency of the Leeward Islands Colony is St. Christopher-Nevis.

† See page 265 for a reference to the confused state of the legislation which resulted from this.

become one of the Windward Islands) is due to the different histories and traditions of the islands, the intense local pride and prejudice, and the no less intense jealousy which the people of each island feel towards the others. Proposals for the amalgamation of the West Indies, which I believe must come sooner or later, will have to take into account this local feeling. A common Civil Service and better communications by sea as well as by air will, I hope, break down the prejudice which still exists and make, in time, a united West Indies out of what is now little more than a geographical expression. It is amazing how little the people of one island know of the others; Nevis is no more than two miles from St. Kitts at its nearest point, yet in all the years I lived in St. Kitts I do not remember visiting Nevis more than three or four times.

The area of St. Kitts is about 68 square miles, less than half the size of the Isle of Wight. The south-eastern end is generally low-lying, with a few hills, and contains some large salt ponds, but the main part of the island consists of a backbone of high mountains, surrounded by gentle slopes and flat lands along the coast. The highest peak, 3,700 feet above sea level, is Mount Misery, an extinct volcano with a large crater in which hot springs and a strong smell of sulphur still exist to remind visitors of unpleasant possibilities. The higher slopes of the mountains are clothed with forests and bush, the lower slopes provide good pasturage, and the fertile lowlands are covered by fields of sugar-cane and cotton, the contrasting shades of green being very striking. There are a few small streams and a number of watercourses which are dry for most of the year but become raging torrents after heavy rain. There are no harbours but the roadstead of Basseterre provides safe anchorage except during southerly gales. The climate is a good one and the island is cooled by the regular trade winds. The present population is about 19,000, and a high proportion of this number is of African descent. There are a few whites of the estate-owning, official, and professional class, and a handful of "poor whites," mostly fishermen. There are also a few hundred "Portuguese," the descendants of agricultural labourers imported many years ago from Madeira, who now own many of the sugar estates on which their fathers worked and most of the "rum-shops," the local public houses.

St. Kitts was discovered in 1493 by Christopher Columbus, who honoured it with his own name, and was at that time inhabited by Caribs.* Many stone arrow-heads, and other Carib remains, have been found in the island and there is a large rock with crude markings attributed to the Caribs. The Spaniards made no attempt at settlement in St. Kitts, but in 1625 a British party, led by Sir Thomas Warner (an ancestor of the cricketer, Sir Pelham Warner), established themselves in the middle section of the island, while French settlers in the same year occupied the two ends; Basseterre, the present capital, was the French headquarters. For a time, owing to the common danger from the Caribs and the Spaniards, the French and British lived as neighbours in harmony. They annihilated the unfortunate Caribs and in spite of a disastrous raid by the Spaniards and the destruction of their crops by hurricanes, the settlers held their own and were reinforced by further arrivals from home. Nevis, Antigua, Montserrat and other islands were colonised from St. Kitts, where, owing to the presence of the French, there was insufficient land for British settlers. At a later date the wars between the British and French in Europe led to fighting between the two nations in St. Kitts, first one side winning and then the other. In 1713 the whole island was surrendered to the British, but in 1782 the fortress of Brimstone Hill capitulated† to a French expedition after a prolonged siege and the island was surrendered. It was restored to Great Britain in 1783 and has been British ever since.

Throughout their early history St. Kitts and Nevis remained separate colonies, but in 1871 they became Presidencies of the federal Colony of the Leeward Islands; in 1882 they were amalgamated into a single Presidency. Nevis has an area of about 50 square miles and, like its neighbour, there is a central mass of forested mountains surrounded by cultivated slopes and level fields, but the soil is very rocky. It was in Nevis that Nelson was married, in 1787, to Mrs. Nisbet, the widow of a doctor, and the register containing the entry of the marriage is still preserved in the church at Fig Tree. The hot springs of Nevis have long been famous in the West Indies and a

* For a reference to the "Black Caribs" of British Honduras, see page 136.

† For the terms of capitulation, see page 262.

hotel is now conducted in the Bath House, built in the 18th century at the springs.

In addition to a set of stamps for the Leeward Islands Colony, each of the Presidencies issues a separate series which is used concurrently with the federal set. The stamps for St. Kitts-Nevis show in conventional form the medicinal spring of Nevis, and Columbus on the deck of his ship gazing, no doubt at St. Kitts, through a telescope ; it is unfortunate that the telescope was not invented until about a century after the death of Columbus. Some of the old stamps of Nevis and St. Christopher are very valuable.

The duties to which I was assigned when I first joined the Civil Service in St. Kitts were not very arduous, nor were they very interesting, but they gave me some idea of matters relating to trade and to government accounting, which proved valuable to me in later years. My first appointment was that of Revenue Officer but I frequently acted in various Treasury posts. Later, I sometimes had the opportunity of working in the Administrator's office and there got some insight into the routine of a Secretariat. I have never regretted the fact that I started at the bottom of the Civil Service ladder, as the drudgery of those early years gave me a knowledge of the details of office organisation which very few of my colleagues possessed.

Sometimes, as acting Harbour Master, it fell to me to board vessels on arrival, and in rough weather this could be exciting. A rowing boat, pulled by four men, was used, and there was little danger in going out if reasonable care were taken. Coming ashore was a different matter, as the waves ran very high and broke in an alarming manner over the sand-bar which lay a few yards beyond the ends of the two piers. I am glad to say that I only once capsized the boat, and then without casualties, but this was due more to good luck than anything else as the steersman had little control over the boat once she was caught on the crest of a breaker. I spent a great deal of my time on the sea, rowing in a small boat I shared with three other men, or sailing in borrowed boats. One of the local pastimes was the hunting of sharks. A dead horse or mule (often very dead) was towed out to sea and soon attracted sharks, which were harpooned

from a rowing-boat and if possible shot at the same time. It was an exciting game if one were a good sailor.

More pleasant, if not so exciting, was the shooting that was often possible, in the swamps of ducks and wading birds and in the mountain forests of blue pigeons. I once shot a monkey and felt like a murderer. As a member of the local Volunteer Force I also did a fair amount of rifle shooting.* Cricket was also popular, but at this game, on which I have always been very keen, I was never much good, one of the many disappointments of my life. I played "soccer" fairly regularly. Lawn tennis was, however, the game I played most often, and there is no doubt in my mind that it is the best game for the tropics, giving just enough exercise to keep one fit.

In the days when there was a North American and West Indies Squadron, based on Bermuda, the annual visit of the Squadron was the great sporting and social event of the year. Cricket and tennis matches were arranged and there was often a sailing regatta ; picnics were organised for the men and picnics and dances for the officers. Even the visit of a single cruiser was an event of some importance to the small white community, which had few amusements at ordinary times, and they made the most of it. I hope that the naval officers enjoyed their visits to St. Kitts as much as we did.

Each visit was the occasion for a subscription dance and many such dances have I organised ; they were always popular, especially among the ladies, who on such occasions could be certain of a sufficiency of partners. At ordinary times there were never enough men to go round, as too many of the young white men had been forced, for lack of suitable local employment, to seek their fortunes in other lands.

Every Saturday afternoon there was a gathering at the club in Basseterre. Owners and managers of the sugar estates in all parts of the island assembled there to meet their friends and to play their weekly games of billiards and bridge. Although no part of St. Kitts was more than fifteen miles from Basseterre and there was a good road round the island there were then no motor cars and a visit to the town, by carriage and pair, was a tedious business, not to

* See page 243.

be undertaken without good reason. In the St. Kitts Club on special occasions an excellent rum punch was brewed by one of the members who was an expert on the mixing of drinks. (One of his special concoctions, which I have never met anywhere else, was a brandy cocktail flavoured, if that is not too mild an expression, with a liberal dash of *crème-de-menthe*.) I do not think that the virtue of well-matured rum, as a drink, is sufficiently appreciated ; provided that I were not going to drink any other kind of liquor that evening, I would sooner drink rum cocktails or rum punch than anything else. A good rum punch ("one of sour, two of sweet, three of strong, and four of weak")* is something to remember—and to respect. An elaborate compliment I once heard in St. Kitts was the description of a man as "a gentleman and a scholar—and a judge of rum."

During the Christmas holidays, every year, bands of masqueraders played or danced in the streets. There were Negroes dressed as "Red Indians," who waved tomahawks and yelled in a bloodcurdling manner ; "sailors" who performed various tricks with ropes ; "women" in long skirts and tall head-dresses who danced on stilts ; actors who played such parts as those of David and Goliath, and various other masked men who enjoyed themselves and amused the crowd. There was seldom any disorder, although the narrow streets were packed by the crowds of masqueraders and their attendant audiences.

In 1909 I was appointed Clerk to the Magistrate of Basseterre and was soon afterwards made a Justice of the Peace for the Presidency. The magistrate at that time was an elderly gentleman, whose father had been magistrate before him, and whose son, after holding other posts, became Chief Justice of the Leeward Islands ; another instance of family continuity in the Colonial Service. In an island where the population was generally law-abiding, the work in the Magistrate's Court was not very heavy and most of the cases were of little importance. They included, however, some of those penal clauses against defaulting labourers which struck me, even at that time, as unjust in spite of the law ; modern labour legislation does not permit this kind of case.

* One part of lime-juice, two parts of syrup, three of rum, and four parts of crushed ice or iced water.

In 1910 I took my first leave, and spent it in England, being for most of the time at St. Leonards-on-Sea, where my mother lived. Soon after my return from leave I was sent to Anguilla to act as Magistrate. This island, which has an area of about 35 square miles and a population of 4,000, is a dependency of St. Kitts-Nevis, and is under the immediate control of a magistrate who is generally the medical officer. As the medical officer had been invalided, and there was no other doctor available to take his place, it was decided to send me. I travelled over the sixty miles of sea which separate Anguilla from St. Kitts in a small sailing vessel which, owing to the light wind, took over 48 hours to complete the voyage. We passed close to the small Dutch islands of Saba and St. Eustatius. The former is practically a rock rising steeply from the sea, but it has a population of nearly 2,000, most of them white, who live in settlements over a thousand feet above sea-level; boats are built on the top of the rock and lowered into the sea by ropes. St. Eustatius was, in its day, a great centre for trade and when it was captured by Rodney in 1781 the booty was valued at over £3,000,000; today the island is of little importance.

When I arrived at Anguilla I found that there was little to do but in spite of this I enjoyed the months that I stayed there. I tried such trifling cases as there were, kept the Treasury books, supervised the repairs of the roads, kept an eye on the Customs officers, and directed the energies of the two or three short-term prisoners who remained, almost willingly, in the prison. These prisoners were released each morning from their cells by the single constable in the island, who was also the gaoler, and they came unescorted to my bungalow for instructions. I would give my orders to the "senior prisoner" and they would depart for their day's work, repairing some part of a road or cutting the grass in the cemetery. I would ride out later to visit them at their work and my coming was the signal for an outburst of energy too good to be true. These prisoners made excellent scouts, and could always tell me in which direction the ducks were flying and in which of the numerous ponds on the island I was most likely to find them; I regret to say that on one occasion I used them to recover the birds that I shot and I think they enjoyed that day as much as I did.

I have heard that the Governor of a certain colony used to go fishing quite often in a canoe manned by prisoners, who were themselves generally professional fishermen ; no doubt they found this form of "hard labour" a pleasant change from the routine of prison life. In the Gold Coast the inmates of some of the prisons are employed almost entirely on catching and curing fish to be used to supplement prison diets throughout the colony. On one occasion after the prisoners at Keta had had a particularly strenuous few days of work they were given a holiday as a reward, which they had, perforce, to spend inside the prison walls ; this nearly led to a riot and the men clamoured to be allowed out to go on with their fishing. It is very difficult to find a suitable occupation for short-term prisoners, and very often there is nothing else for them to do than to cut the grass in the Government House grounds and other places. When I arrived in the Gold Coast I found that the custom had grown up of employing prisoners in Government House itself, polishing the floors and the furniture ; I stopped this form of employment, and these "lusty handmaids of the Crown," as I have heard them called, went back to more suitable work.

Most of the white men who lived in Anguilla, fishermen and excellent seamen, worked as deck-hands in yachts at various American resorts during the summer and returned to spend the winter (and their money) in their native island. The small island of St. Martin, divided between the French and the Dutch, lies only a few miles from Anguilla, and a great deal of rum was smuggled into Anguilla from St. Martin. When I rode about the island I was frequently invited by the hospitable people, as I was passing their houses, to come in for a drink ; when I refused, with thanks, they thought it was because I would not drink smuggled rum and assured me that they had a bottle of duty-paid rum kept specially for the magistrate. In this they showed greater tact than a certain Gold Coast Chief who invited me, many years later, after a very special "durbar" at which I had presented him with a decoration, to go to his house for refreshment ; after I had drunk his health in some excellent champagne he whispered to me with some pride that it had "come across the frontier" the night before without the Customs authorities knowing of it.

After I had been in Anguilla for a short time I discovered, to my mortification, that I was known as the "little magistrate," with reference to my age and not to my size ; it is unusual in the West Indies for a young man to hold a responsible post. Some of the people in the more outlying settlements did not realise at first that I was not a doctor and were much disappointed when I refused to treat them. Some of them would insist that I should give them medicine, and alleged that they knew from which bottle the doctor had given them medicine before. I confined my practice, however, to the disinfecting and bandaging of cuts, the issue of quinine, and liberal doses of salts ; none of my patients ever returned a second time but I know that some at least survived my treatment and bore me no ill-will for it.

It was in another colony that District Commissioners, in stations where no medical man was within reach, were issued with various bottles of medicine, each plainly numbered, and a card showing which number was to be used for each kind of illness, the symptoms of which were carefully explained. It is said that on one occasion a District Commissioner found that the symptoms indicated the use of medicine from bottle No. 8, but as this bottle was unfortunately empty he gave the patient a double dose of No. 4 ; the result is not reported.

In 1911, having by this time risen to the rank of regimental sergeant-major in the local volunteer force, I was one of those selected for the contingent which went to London for the coronation of King George the Fifth. Some of us rode in the Royal procession, while others were paraded opposite Buckingham Palace throughout a long hot day. We were under canvas in the grounds of the Duke of York's School in Chelsea for about two weeks, and witnessed the naval review at Portsmouth and other festivities, finally receiving our coronation medals from the King at a parade in Buckingham Palace gardens. After taking a further fortnight's leave at St. Leonards-on-Sea I returned to St. Kitts.

In 1912 I went to Dominica to act as Private Secretary to the Administrator, Sir Douglas Young, afterwards Governor of the Falkland Islands. Dominica was then still a Presidency of the Leeward Islands, but its industries and most of its interests were

quite different from those of the other islands of the group and in 1940 it was transferred to the Windward Islands, to which it should always have been joined. The island, which has an area of 305 square miles, is very mountainous, the highest peak, Mount Diablotin, being 4,747 feet above sea level. There is a boiling lake at an elevation of 2,300 feet, and a number of thermal, sulphur, and other springs. The mountains are densely forested and there are numerous rivers and streams. In 1912 there were only a few miles of carriage roads (no motor cars had yet appeared) in the island and most of the travelling was done on horseback along bridle paths, or in boats along the coast. The population of about 50,000 consists mostly of people of African descent, speaking a French patois. The chief town is Roseau.

Although Dominica was discovered by Columbus in 1493, Carib resistance in the forests and mountains was too strong at first for European settlements to be formed, and it was not until the eighteenth century that the French tried to establish themselves there. The island changed hands between the French and British several times, but from 1805 the British have remained in undisputed possession. The Caribs were gradually overcome and today only a few hundred remain, of whom less than two hundred are of pure blood. They occupy a reserve on the windward side of the island, and their Chief used to receive a small stipend from the Government. This Chief was a dignified enough figure when he came to Government House, on the morning of the last day of each month, to obtain the voucher by which he drew his stipend ; he generally returned in the afternoon, smelling strongly of rum, to send messages of greeting to "my brother, the King of England."

A number of young Englishmen were in Dominica at that time, trying to make their fortunes by the growing of citrus fruit and other tropical crops ; various causes, not the least being the absence of roads by which they could evacuate their produce, led to the failure of most of these enterprises and at the outbreak of war in 1914 many of the men left to join the army. They were a pleasant crowd, and the Saturday evening reunion at the Roseau Club of men who had come in on horseback from their plantations, some of them from a great distance, was always cheerful and agreeable. A great deal of

whisky was certainly consumed but these men were back at their work next day none the worse for their weekly dissipation.

It was while I served in the Leeward Islands that I learned to appreciate the reason why West Indian opinion is so critical of "imported" officials. I shall refer to this again in a later chapter,* and it is enough to say here that some of the men sent to these colonies to fill official positions were of poor quality. There were at that time a number of local men, both white and coloured, who could more competently have discharged the duties of these posts; had they been given a better chance many of the young men who later made careers for themselves in other parts of the world might have remained in their own colonies and raised the general standard of the West Indian Civil Service.

I do not mean to imply by this that the "imported" officials were all failures, and that local men were all of high quality. Some of the "imported" officials were very efficient indeed and many of the local officials were poorly educated, lazy and incompetent. One local head of a department was seldom sober after luncheon, and was generally known by the name of his favourite brand of whisky. But speaking generally, the local officials in the Leeward Islands were better, in my time at any rate, than the men who came out from England. I was, of course, prejudiced in those days in favour of the local officials, but, looking back after many years' absence, I still feel that the opinion I held then, which was the opinion held generally by all the local residents, was the right one, and was justified by the facts.

In St. Kitts and the other islands there still remain many old white families, whose ancestors had come out to the West Indies a century or two earlier, and had at one time grown rich on the profits of their sugar estates. As the selling price of sugar fell and these people still kept up the style of living to which their families had been accustomed for generations there could be only one result. Gradually these old families became impoverished and one by one their estates passed into other hands. It is one of the causes of West Indian poverty that the planters, and others, are such superb optimists. They believe, in spite of repeated disappointments, that the low price

* See page 89.

of sugar is a temporary phenomenon and that a boom such as that which followed the war of 1914-18 is a permanent return to the happy days when sugar was king. At the time of this boom there was an opportunity for estate owners to pay off outstanding mortgages and to effect much-needed improvements on their properties ; from what I have been told I gather that very few of them took such elementary precautions.

It is tragic in the West Indies to see the decaying ruins of so many fine buildings, and the numerous other relics of past grandeur. The old West Indian planters may have been slave-owners and may have derived their wealth from the enforced labour of others, but they knew how to govern themselves. They may have lived too well and drunk too much rum, but they established a tradition of hospitality which still survives, too often, it is true, to the disadvantage of their descendants. They brought with them to the islands British ideals of justice and public service, of sportsmanship and good manners, which are still cherished there. It is often forgotten that Englishmen were living and working in the West Indies, in spite of Spanish attacks and Carib raids, before they had any African slaves.* The coloured people of the West Indies have many grievances, but they and their sympathisers are wrong in believing that the whites have no claim to the land, and are mere interlopers. They were white settlers who first cleared the fields and fought against heavy odds in order that they might reap what they had sown, and they were white soldiers who garrisoned the islands (and died in hundreds every year from yellow fever and other diseases) to keep these islands British. No one in these days would wish to justify the slave trade which brought so many Africans across the Atlantic to work on the plantations ; no one wishes to excuse the conditions under which so many West Indian negroes are living today ; but racial prejudice and the lack of a sense of proportion tend to the under-valuing of what the white West Indians did in the past.

It is difficult to say what the future of the West Indies will be. Of the total population of about 3,000,000,† nearly half live in Jamaica, which is some distance from the rest of the group. The remainder

* The Spaniards had Negro slaves in the West Indies in the 16th century.

† Including British Guiana, British Honduras and the Bahamas.

are scattered through a number of islands and the mainland colonies of British Guiana and British Honduras. Yet there are no less than eleven* British colonies in the West Indies, although the four colonies of the Windward Islands have a single Governor between them. Another important factor is the small size of some of the units. British Guiana has an area of 89,000 square miles, and British Honduras 8,800 square miles, but all the island colonies between them are only 12,000 square miles in area, and of this total Jamaica and the Bahamas are each about 4,400 square miles.

The apparently obvious solution is the amalgamation or federation of these colonies under a single government, and proposals to this end have been put forward repeatedly during the past century. None of the proposals has so far proved practicable, and no proposal for union that does not come from the people themselves has any prospect of success. In a later chapter† I shall refer to the desirability of giving the colonial peoples what they want (within reason) rather than what we think is good for them, and I shall only say here that the schemes drawn up in the past by individuals and commissions have failed to take sufficiently into account the human factor, and the existence of prejudices based on geography and history.‡

It is quite wrong to think that amalgamation would result in economy of administration. The administration would probably be better under a single government, and better value would be obtained for the money spent, but there would be no actual saving of expenditure. Many of the schemes put forward in the past aimed at reducing the cost of administration, which is admittedly high for the small population concerned but there is a minimum establishment necessary for any unit of government, irrespective of population. The salaries of officials in the West Indies today are low as compared with salaries in other parts of the world, and if anything the cost of administration should be increased in the interests of efficiency; cheap officials are expensive luxuries.

* Bahamas, Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and the four Windward Islands, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent.

† See page 310.

‡ The recent (1947) Conference in Jamaica, presided over by the Secretary of State, Mr. Creech Jones, may have a good result.

But if economy is neither possible nor desirable as a result of amalgamation there are other factors to be considered, and efficiency is the first of them. None of the smaller colonies can afford to pay the salaries of first-class men and men of the first class are needed just as much in the smaller colonies as they are in larger ones. It was for this reason that I suggested to the West India Royal Commission of 1938-39, when it visited British Honduras, that a number of highly-qualified professional men should be provided for the West Indies as a whole, whose services would be at the disposal of the different governments as advisers. I suggested, for example, that there should be a medical adviser who would visit the colonies in turn to advise on all medical and health matters; his advice, if accepted by the government of the colony, to be carried out by the local medical authorities. In their recommendations* the Commissioners went further than I had suggested, and indeed further than I think necessary, by advocating the appointment of a Comptroller, under whose directions a team of experts should work. This centralised authority, independent of the colonial governors, makes the proper employment of these experts very difficult, inasmuch as they advise the Comptroller rather than the Governors, and come up against the Governors' local professional advisers.† But it is a step in the right direction as the individual West Indian colonies cannot afford the services of the experts they so badly need.

Judging from the prejudices which existed in the small Leeward Islands group as between the people of one island and those of another, it is not going to be easy to get the West Indians to come together in any form of amalgamation or federation. In St. Kitts, for example, it was strongly felt that Antigua, as the headquarters of the federal government, was getting all the benefits of federation and that St. Kitts paid too large a share of the federal expenditure; similar feelings would be aroused towards any island chosen as the headquarters of the West Indian group. Then again, the difficulties of communication are serious. Jamaica is about 1,000 miles from

* West India Royal Commission, 1938-39, Recommendations, Cmd. 6174 (1940). The full Report of the Commission was published in 1945 as Cmd. 6607, the Government having decided not to publish it during the war. I think now, as I thought at the time, that it was a mistake to postpone publication.

† The same difficulty arose in West Africa, see page 190.

Trinidad and nearly as far from the rest of the eastern chain of islands. Even when air travel reduces the time involved in moving from one island to another only a limited proportion of the population will be able to take advantage of it, and the insular mentality of the majority will remain unchanged.

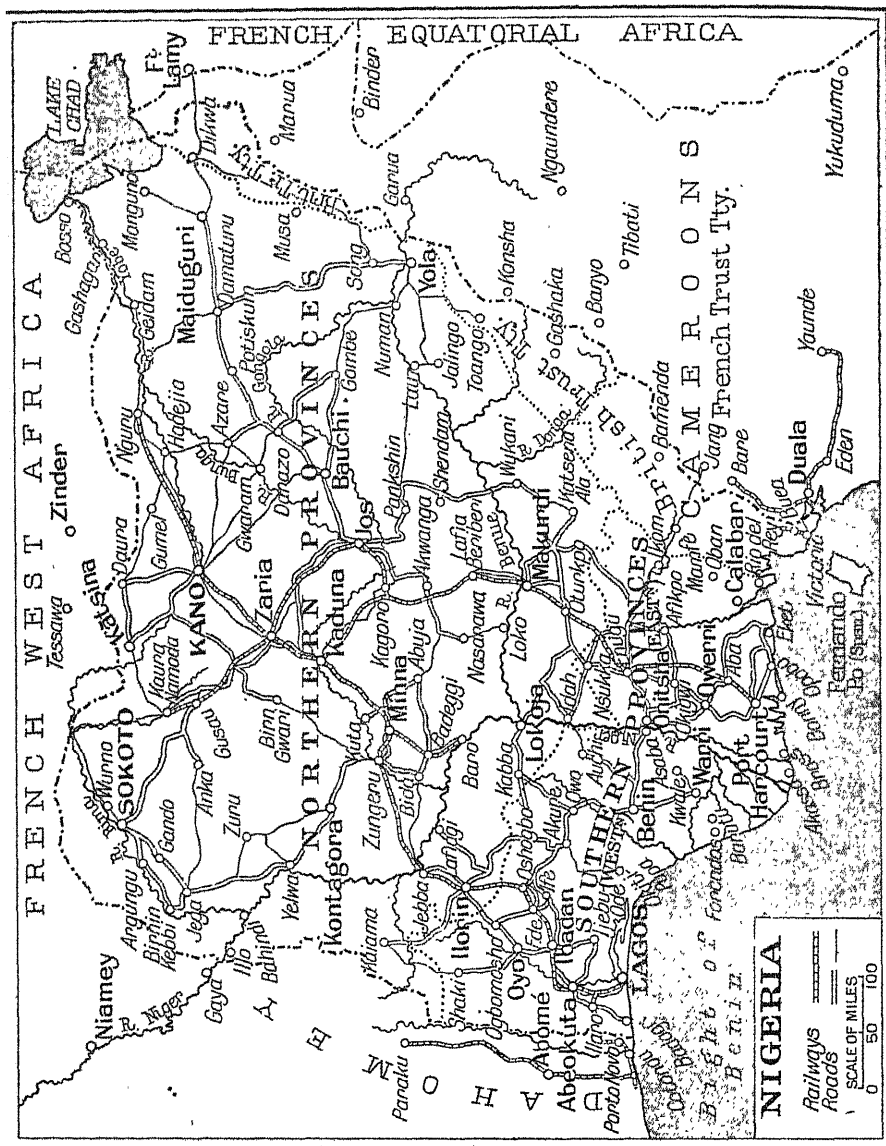
In spite, however, of the difficulties which I foresee, some form of union remains the only practical hope for the future of the British West Indies, and steps towards the desired end should be taken as soon as possible. In my view the first step should be the establishment of a combined West Indian Civil Service and the gradual building up of unified West Indian services and institutions. In the meantime attention should be given to the improvement of communications, by sea as well as by air, and the transport services should be cheap enough to allow the ordinary people to travel and to visit other islands than their own ; such services could not be made to pay without subsidies.

An outstanding fact regarding the West Indies which is not sufficiently appreciated is the extreme poverty in which the majority of the population is living. To some extent this is the people's own fault, as many of them are incurably lazy and will not work more than is absolutely necessary. In the House of Commons, on the 28th July, 1937, a member asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he was aware "of the habit of labourers in Trinidad to work only for such number of days per week as to bring them sufficient funds for their requirements" ; the Secretary of State replied in the affirmative, and there is no doubt that in many of the West Indian islands the only result of an increase of wages is to reduce the number of days on which the labourer will work. It is seldom that a man of the labouring class will work for more than is barely sufficient to keep himself and his family alive ; he seldom appears to consider the possibility of an improvement in his living conditions or the advantages of putting by some reserve for the inevitable rainy day. To what extent this apparent laziness is due to poor health cannot be assessed, but it is significant that hook-worm, known as "the lazy man's disease," is prevalent throughout the West Indies. Perhaps this lack of energy and ambition is also due, in some part, to the effects of slavery and the thriftlessness of a still surviving slave

mentality. There are the added problems of over-population, and what the Royal Commission called "the social, moral and economic evils of promiscuity."*

To this promiscuity is due the startling fact that in Jamaica, for example, more than 70 per cent. of the annual births are illegitimate. Even allowing for what is locally known as "faithful concubinage," a delightful term for those more or less permanent unions from which only the marriage ceremony seems to be lacking, there must be a lamentable number of irregular and even casual relationships to give such a figure. The father in such cases seldom gives any support to the mother and her children, and, apart from other serious results, this leads to considerable hardship and poverty, and, indirectly, to further promiscuity. The existence of "faithful concubinage" is acceptable both to the men and the women. The reluctance of the men to marry is largely due to inability to incur the high expenses which custom imposes on the bridegroom ; the cost of the wedding garments, and of the refreshments which would be expected by friends and acquaintances, must be formidable to a man earning only a small wage. The women have a different reason. They feel more independent without the marriage tie, and better able to leave the men if they are treated badly. I was told by one woman who had lived faithfully with a man for many years, and borne him five children, that she did not want him to marry her, as he was good to her then but might ill-treat her if she became his wife. It is not unusual for such people to marry in their old age after having lived together for many years.

* West India Royal Commission, 1938-39, Recommendations, Cmd. 6174 (1940), p. 17.



CHAPTER II

NIGERIA

IN the summer of 1912, while I was still serving in Dominica, I was offered the appointment of Supervisor of Customs, Southern Nigeria, which I accepted against the advice of most of my friends, who, with their limited knowledge of West Africa, thought that I was going to almost certain death. The reputation of West Africa as the White Man's Grave still lingers on. It is certainly not a health resort,* and the vital statistics for Europeans must be studied with the realisation that all have had to pass a stiff medical examination before receiving an appointment in West Africa. The Europeans in the country are therefore all picked men, from the physical point of view, and are nearly all of them in the prime of life. In spite of this the casualties are heavy, not only from the fevers and other insect-borne diseases so common in the tropics, but also from the nervous diseases which are accentuated by the moist heat and other inconveniences of tropical life and by the inevitable separation from family and friends.

When I first went to West Africa there were practically no European children in the British colonies; today there are a great many, but even so there comes a time when European children must be sent to a temperate climate, for their health, or in any case for education. Too often the European woman has to decide whether to be separated from her husband or from her children; in either case the separation is unnatural and the cause of much suffering and unhappiness and it adds to the financial difficulties of men who are never overpaid. The bachelors and the married couples without children are fairly well off in West Africa: those with children, who generally have to keep homes in the United Kingdom and are thus liable to British income tax, can seldom make ends meet. Easier and quicker communication by air may reduce the disadvantages of separation, and better housing and other amenities may improve

* Although I know of a case where a man was invalided from Palestine and sent to the Gold Coast after medical advice that he should be transferred to a healthy climate.

health, but I doubt whether West Africa will ever be a country where Europeans can live in health and comfort.

But even allowing for all this West Africa is not the terrible place which popular opinion believes it to be. Quite a number of Europeans live there and manage to survive. I have myself lived in West Africa, off and on, for over thirty-four years. When I first went to Nigeria all Europeans wore helmets, and thick, padded spine-pads over their bush-shirts, as a matter of course, as a protection against the sun. During the last war British sailors, soldiers and airmen fresh from Home, and members of the American Army, walked about at the hottest time of the day without helmets and sometimes even without shirts.* Early in my service in Nigeria I received a severe "telling-off" from the Colonial Secretary for walking a few yards in the sun without a helmet; it was pointed out to me, with more force than politeness, that the matter of my death was of no consequence in itself but that government would be put to some inconvenience in having to replace me. Such an effect had this telling-off on my youthful mind that to this day I would never think of going outdoors in West Africa without a helmet while the sun was still high. As a matter of fact, I believe that "sunstroke" is more often than not the result of glare, and that the wearing of dark glasses during the day is the best precaution.

Nor is West Africa the savage and dangerous country that some travellers and some books would make us believe. There *are* wild animals and dangerous snakes, but they do not walk or creep about the streets of the towns. Human sacrifice† and cannibalism‡ may still exist, but they are not everyday occurrences. The naked savage still lives in the more remote parts of the colonies, but the African is generally clothed and he is not, as a rule, a savage. I am quite sure that any European, man or woman, could walk alone and unarmed§ from end to end of any British West African colony in perfect safety. Only from biting insects would such a traveller suffer.

* Salt pills were issued to counteract the loss of salt from the body in perspiration, which resulted in heat-stroke.

† See page 179.

‡ See page 33.

§ Since this was written some serious riots have occurred in the Gold Coast in which Europeans were injured. In spite of this I am convinced that in normal times my statement would hold good. The African, unless he has been tampered with by agitators for their own ends, is a decent, courteous and law-abiding person.

After a short leave in England I sailed for West Africa in the German steamer *Professor Woermann*; the only other British official on board was Mr. R. S. Rattray, an Administrative Officer in the Gold Coast who became Government Anthropologist, and later flew the first aeroplane from England to the Gold Coast. He made a reputation later as a glider pilot, and was killed in a glider accident. There was a German consular official, bound I think for Liberia, who distinguished himself by taking an overdose of quinine during the voyage; he was advised to take five grains of quinine a day and took five five-grains tablets by mistake, with disastrous results. At Sekondi I landed to see my brother, R. E. Burns, then in the Treasury Department of the Gold Coast.

I was the only passenger for Lagos, and late one afternoon, a fortnight after leaving England, I landed for the first time on Lagos wharf, an experience which was interesting enough to the newcomer. In those days large steamers could not cross the Lagos bar, so passengers had to be transferred to small tenders which could do so. Passengers were lowered over the side of the steamer by a derrick, seated precariously in a "mammy-chair," a wooden box with two seats facing one another and with iron rods from each corner of the box joining overhead to take the hook at the end of the wire rope from the derrick. With many jerks, and in great anxiety, accentuated by the excited cries of the Krumen working the derrick and the men in the boat below, the passengers descended in the mammy-chair into a surf boat, manned by a dozen or more half-naked paddlers. Seated in a cane chair or on the thwarts of the surf boat they were paddled across to the waiting tender where the process was reversed, and the passengers were hoisted on board in another mammy-chair.*

When I reached the wharf it was nearly dark, and there was no one to meet me. (How different today when the newcomer is comparatively well looked after by the members of his department.) Seeing a white man walking across the wharf, and not realising that he was suffering from alcoholic remorse, I went up to him and asked his

* Except at Takoradi, where the steamers go alongside a wharf, the mammy-chair is still used at all ports in the Gold Coast, the difference being that the passengers are not taken to a tender but are paddled all the way to the shore, through a surf that can be sometimes very dangerous.

advice as to where I should go and how I should get there. His reply was to ask me where I had come from, and when I said I had just arrived from England he asked me why the hell I did not go back there, and walked away. Fortunately, someone else came to my rescue soon afterwards, and I was conveyed in a rickshaw to that delightful residence, the so-called "Chest-of-Drawers," where I lived off and on for some three years. The "Chest-of-Drawers" comprised six sets of quarters, each of which consisted of a bedroom, a small verandah which was the only sitting room available, and the most primitive sanitary arrangements. There was no bathroom, and a camp bath in the bedroom was all that was possible; water for the bath had to be fetched by one's boy* from a well on the race-course opposite the quarters, and was generally muddy and unpleasant. There was a common dining room and a single kitchen, but as the inmates disliked messing together we generally had our meals on our individual verandahs, which could only be reached through the bedrooms; needless to say, the six cooks in the single kitchen invariably fought one another—very noisily. Three of my fellow-sufferers owned gramophones (the wireless was fortunately not yet a menace) and one owned a parrot; we all employed boys who, even if they were quiet when their own masters were at home, were certainly very noisy in their absence. I have thought it desirable to refer at some length to the "Chest-of-Drawers," because my enforced residence there is responsible for the strong views I hold against the compulsory "doubling-up" of officials (and others) in quarters in West Africa. I shall refer elsewhere to the question of quarters.†

I mentioned just above the noisiness of boys. It is amazing how loudly the African or West Indian Negro can talk in ordinary friendly conversation. When he is angry it is not unnatural that he should make a lot of noise about it, but it is difficult to understand why he should talk at the top of his voice, so as to be heard a hundred yards away, when he is sitting or walking beside a friend who would hear him if he whispered. And when half a dozen boys are engaged in friendly conversation the noise is deafening—and sometimes mad-

* Servants in West Africa are always spoken of as "Boys"; most of them do, in fact, start work very young.

† See page 60.

dening. I do not believe that the African realises when he is talking loudly, or that he notices the loud talk of others. More than once, when I have been disturbed at my work by a long drawn-out conversation, conducted *fortissimo* just beneath my office windows, I have told my orderly or messenger to go and "stop that noise"; to which he has invariably replied, "What noise, sir?"

My first view of Nigeria was not impressive. For miles and miles, as one approaches the country by sea, all that is visible is a narrow strip of sand on which the heavy Atlantic surf is breaking with much sound and fury; behind this strip of sand there appears to be an unbroken wall of mangrove forest. The mangrove is one of the most remarkable trees that exist. In some places it is quite small, but in others, and especially in the Niger delta, it is a tall tree, with enormous arched roots; the seeds germinate on the branches and from them descend shoots which take root in the mud below and form new trees. The mangrove flourishes only in salt or brackish water.

Although the mangrove forest along the shores of Nigeria appears unbroken from a distance, it is, as a matter of fact, pierced by a number of different rivers making their way to the sea, including the numerous mouths of the river Niger; all of these rivers are connected, near their mouths and just behind or through the mangrove forest, by numerous creeks and lagoons, and it is possible to travel by launch or canoe, from west to east of Nigeria, within a few miles of the coast, without ever going to sea.

Behind this belt of mangrove, creeks and lagoons, lies the dense evergreen forest of Nigeria, from 50 to 100 miles wide. Here grow magnificent mahoganies, and the oil-palm trees which produce the palm oil and palm kernels of commerce, while in the clearings in this forest are the farms of a great population. Still further inland is a belt of more open country, half forest and half grassland, and behind that again a yet more open country, the soil becoming more loose and sandy as the outskirts of the Sahara desert are approached. In this area is the Bauchi plateau, of an average elevation of 2,000 feet, but with heights rising to over 6,000 feet above sea level.

The country is well watered by innumerable rivers, but the most important are the Niger and its chief tributary, the Benue. The

Niger, which rises to the north-east of Sierra Leone, is 2,600 miles long, and one of the great rivers of the world. Although its existence had been known of in Europe from a very early date, it was not until 1796 that Mungo Park proved that it flowed from west to east, and it was not until 1830 that the Lander brothers discovered that it flowed into the Gulf of Guinea, through a delta which for three centuries had been visited by European seamen, all of whom thought that the channels of the delta were the mouths of separate rivers.

Few people in England realise the size and population of Nigeria. It has an area of 372,000 square miles, which makes it larger than Great Britain and France together. It has a population of well over twenty millions, more than the total population of Canada, Australia and New Zealand put together. This population is divided into a number of tribes, of which the most important are the Fulani, Kanuri, and the Hausa-speaking tribes of the north ; and the Yoruba and Ibo tribes of the south.

The Fulanis are probably the most interesting people in Nigeria. Their origin is obscure, and they have at different times been held to be of Indian, Jewish, Malayan or Phoenician stock ; they are said in their youth to bear a resemblance to the Egyptian portraits of the Hyksos shepherd kings. They are probably of Berber origin and are thought to have moved, over many centuries, westwards across the north of Africa to the Atlantic shores, and then eastwards into Nigeria. Originally a pastoral people, some of the Fulani today still own and look after vast herds of cattle, moving with their animals from place to place in search of water and pasturage. These people, the "Cow-Fulani" or "Borroroje," have kept their blood pure and still retain the fine features, straight hair, and red complexion of their race. Those Fulani, however, who have drifted to the towns, and are known as the Fulanen Gidda (gidda = compound), have mixed their blood with Negroid and Negro peoples and are almost entirely black, although their features still show their Berber origin.

Of higher intelligence than their Hausa-speaking neighbours, with whom they at first lived amicably, the Fulani of the towns soon won to positions of importance. In 1802 one of their sheikhs, Othman dan Fodio, shocked by the lax conduct of the Hausa rulers, who were

nominally Muslims, preached a holy war which was quickly successful. The principal followers of Othman became the Emirs of various states, all owing allegiance to the Sultan of Sokoto, the headquarters of Othman's son, whom he appointed to succeed him. The present Sultan of Sokoto,* a descendant of Othman, bears the title of his great ancestor—Sarkin Musulmi (Commander of the Faithful)—and is one of the leading figures of the Muslim world. The principal Emirs are those of Kano, Katsena, and Zaria.

The Hausa-speaking tribes whom the Fulanis conquered in their holy war, and whom they still govern,† are of Negroid origin. For many years the Hausas were supposed to be a distinct race, and the people of all the tribes which spoke the language were called Hausas; it is now realised that there is no Hausa race, but that the Hausa language is spoken by a number of different peoples as their mother tongue and is used as a *lingua franca* by many more.

The Kanuri, who inhabit the north-eastern corner of Nigeria, near Lake Chad, were not conquered by the Fulani; their ruler is the Shehu (Sheikh) of Bornu. In addition to the Fulani, Hausas and Kanuri, the Northern Provinces of Nigeria contain many other peoples, some Muslims or under Muslim influence, but others pagans,‡ wearing a minimum of clothing, and addicted in some cases to such unpleasant practices as cannibalism. It is these pagans who provide most of the labour for the tin mines on the Bauchi plateau, and it is an amusing sight to see almost naked men entering the suburban train in the morning to go to work, and placing their spears on the luggage rack as the London business man will place his umbrella.

In the south-west of Nigeria are the Yorubas, an advanced and enterprising people, with a flair for trade.§ They live mostly in large towns, the largest of which, Ibadan, is said to contain at least 380,000 inhabitants. There are several Yoruba states, of which the

* To whom I had the pleasure of presenting the insignia of the C.M.G. in 1942.

† When Northern Nigeria was conquered, Lord Lugard took advantage of the Administrative ability of the Fulani chiefs, and used them to govern the country under the supervision of British Residents. This was the beginning (in Nigeria) of what has become known as "Indirect Rule," that is, the governing of the people through "Native Administrations." The system has now been adopted (and adapted) in several other colonies.

‡ Or animists; most of the peoples spoken of as pagans are really animists.

§ Numbers of them are trading in the Gold Coast and other neighbouring countries.

most important are Oyo, Ife, and Abeokuta. The titles of the chiefs vary in nearly every state ; there is the Alafin of Oyo, the Oni of Ife, the Alake of Abeokuta, and the Owa of Owo. Lagos, the chief town of Nigeria, has a mixed population of about 126,000, but a large proportion are Yorubas. The Ibos, who live east of the Niger, number some three millions, and there are several other tribes, of which the most important are the Ibibios. The Binis, who inhabit the Benin country, were at one time very powerful and notorious for human sacrifice ; their town was sometimes spoken of as "the City of Blood."

The Fulani, Kanuri, and the Hausa-speaking tribes are practically all Muslims ; about half of the population of Lagos, and a small proportion of the rest of the people in other parts of the country, are also followers of the Prophet. The remainder are mainly pagans or animists, while Christianity has many adherents, especially in the coastal towns.

Each of the tribes I have mentioned above speaks a separate language, and there are numerous others ; in one province alone over sixty distinct languages have been identified.

When the British first visited Nigeria in 1553* the most powerful kingdom near the coast was that of Benin, and a trade in pepper and ivory soon grew up with this kingdom and with the minor states along the banks of the rivers. Then came the slave trade,† which flourished for three hundred years and brought untold suffering on the country, by stimulating wars for the sake of capturing prisoners to be sold as slaves. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the British Government attempted, single-handed, to stop the slave trade by means of a naval squadron stationed on the West African coast, the crews of which were decimated by yellow fever and other diseases. The better to control the slave trade and to regulate the legitimate traffic which, it was hoped, would replace it, British consuls were appointed to various places on the Nigerian rivers, and gradually became responsible for their government. Lagos, for long

* Portuguese navigators had reached the Nigerian coast more than half a century earlier.

† Slavery had existed in Africa from time immemorial, and Europeans were in no way responsible for this. But the overseas slave trade considerably increased the demand for slaves.

a centre of the slave traffic, was captured by a naval expedition and later annexed as a colony (in 1861). The Royal Niger Company, in 1886, was granted a Charter under which it governed the country along the banks of the Niger and Benue rivers, and attempted to extend its rule over the slave-raiding Fulani emirates of the north; the Charter was revoked in 1900 and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was established, the emirates being subdued shortly afterwards and the slave trade finally destroyed. In 1906 the Colony of Lagos was amalgamated with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria,* and in 1914 there was a further amalgamation with Northern Nigeria.

After a few months in Lagos I was sent to Koko Town, a small station on the Benin river, which was an important trading post. It consisted of a single street along the right bank of the river, with a bungalow for the Supervisor of Customs, a mud-walled rest-house, customs offices, a few trading "factories" and the houses of the merchants, and practically nothing else. A few Africans lived in the station, but the nearest village of any size was "America," some miles down river, to which I will refer later; about twenty-five miles up-river was Sapele, the headquarters of a District Commissioner.†

My welcome to Koko Town, as to Lagos, was not effusive. The Supervisor of Customs whom I had been sent to relieve was decidedly odd (I heard later that this was the reason why he was being removed from Koko Town) and very suspicious. There was no telegraph to Koko Town in those days, and I was the bearer of the letter informing him that he was to hand over the station to me. He met the launch on which I arrived (the arrival of the weekly mail launch was a great occasion at this lonely station) and I introduced myself, but I was unable to give him any proof that satisfied him that I was in fact the person mentioned in the official letter I had brought, and in these circumstances he refused to acknowledge me or to take me to his house; he agreed, however, that I was at liberty to occupy the rest-

* Formerly the Niger Coast Protectorate, and before that the Oil Rivers Protectorate; these protectorates grew up as the result of the vague and ill-defined control of British consuls during the period when the slave trade was being suppressed.

† Afterwards styled (in Nigeria) District Officer.

house, which I proceeded to do, leaving it until morning to decide what my next move should be. About nine o'clock that night he came to the rest-house and, informing me that he could not allow even a dog to be out-of-doors on such a night (it was pouring with rain as it usually did in Koko Town), pressed me to come to his house to sleep ; as he was in a highly excitable condition, and as the roof of the rest-house was leaking badly, I thought it better to accept his gracefully-worded invitation, and went to his house, having my camp-bed put up on the verandah of the bungalow. During the night he came several times to speak to me, and finally arrived with two photographs in his hands asking me whether I would like to see his wife's photograph. I was half asleep, the candle he held gave little illumination, and the two photographs seemed to be of two different women. Anxious to be polite I asked, "Which one ?"; he drew himself up, said, "Sir, do you suggest that I have two wives ?" and stamped away, leaving me at last in peace. Next morning he informed me that he had decided to recognise me as the person I said I was, handed over the office without further trouble, and departed in the mail launch, to my great relief.

A month or so later the medical authorities advised that he should be permanently invalided from Nigeria, but when he got to England he obtained a certificate from an alienist that he was sane and fit to return. About a year after that I lived next door to him in Lagos, and, hearing screams in his room, went in to investigate. I found that he was hitting a very small African boy, who, he said, had tried to murder him, and in pointing out how absurd the charge was I used the words "Don't be a lunatic." His reply came at once, "I am not a lunatic ; I have a certificate that I am sane and that is more than you have." I could not think of the correct answer to this, but in the meantime the small boy had escaped. A little later the poor fellow was invalided, this time permanently.

To return to Koko Town. My Customs duties were very light, especially as I had an excellent African clerk who was well up in Customs routine. Once a fortnight I went up to Sapele for the week-end, either by the mail launch or in a gig rowed by four men. At Sapele I played tennis with the Assistant District Commissioner from Kwale, who also came in to the District headquarters every

fortnight. The District Commissioner of Sapele was very pleasant, but obviously thought very little of my comparatively abstemious habits, which were different from his own. It was only when I explained to him that I could not play hard tennis if I had done some hard drinking the evening before that he appeared satisfied ; he did not play tennis himself and thought the reason a poor one, but at any rate he accepted it. Every evening at Sapele practically the whole population met outside the District Commissioner's house at a "Scotch Club" ; each man's boy brought his master's deck-chair, glass, bottle of whisky and sodawater, and each man drank as much as he liked. We sat facing the river, and it was cool and pleasant after the sun had set. There I heard many tales of past times in West Africa, some true and some meant for the "new boy," who believed, for a time, those that were reasonably credible.

I was lucky in being given certain administrative work to do by the District Commissioner, who was glad enough to save himself the trouble of travelling to Koko Town more than was absolutely necessary. In this connection I had to visit Chief Nana* in his village of America, which was well laid out with wide streets, all kept scrupulously clean. Nana was one of the most interesting Africans I ever met, a man of strong character and good manners. He was so pressing in his hospitality that I could not avoid drinking the warm, sweet champagne which he produced when I visited him. Nana had been a great slave dealer in his day. Recognised by the British Consul in 1885 as the "Governor" of the Benin river, he had taken advantage of his position to terrorise the district, sending his armed canoes to raid the neighbouring villages and carrying off the people as slaves, while he fortified his town of Brohemie with over 100 cannon. At last, in 1894, a force of four British men-of-war, with troops of the Niger Coast Protectorate, captured his headquarters, which were protected not only by guns but by the swampy ground and winding creeks by which alone Brohemie could be approached. Nana escaped for a time but was captured later and, after trial, was deported to the Gold Coast ; he was allowed to return, as a private individual, in 1906, and built the village of America. Although he was not recognised as a Chief by government, the

* This was his name ; in the Gold Coast Nana is not a name, but a term of respect, used in addressing a Chief.

people of the river never failed to pay him honour ; even the recognised Chief, Dore Numa, when his canoe met that of Nana on the river, would draw aside until he passed. Nana bore no ill-will towards the British who had defeated and exiled him, although no doubt he longed for a return of the good old slaving days.

In a few months' time I was recalled to Lagos and there I completed my first tour of service in Nigeria. In those days the fixed length of tour was twelve months, and a special medical examination was necessary before an officer was allowed to stay longer. For personal reasons I was anxious to do a month overtime, and this was convenient from the departmental point of view, but, although I was in rude health, I had the greatest difficulty in persuading the medical officer to sign the certificate that I was fit to do the additional month. In view of the long tours which I (and others) did in later years* it seems ridiculous that such a fuss should have been made over a tour of thirteen months. We were all serving then under the "old" leave conditions, which provided for a tour of twelve months followed by leave on full pay for the period of the voyages (a fortnight each way) and ten days in England in respect of each completed month of the tour. This meant, in effect, that five European officers were needed to fill three posts, so that each officer could take the leave to which he was entitled, and the cost to the colony was considerable.

In 1919 the "new" regulations came into force, and were made applicable to all newly-appointed officers and to such of the old hands as opted for the change. The main attraction of the new conditions, which inclined the older officer to accept them, was the payment by government of the passages of the officer's wife. The "new" conditions provided for a tour of from twelve to eighteen months, at the Governor's discretion, but the usual length of tour was eighteen months ; the leave on full pay, in addition to the period of the voyages, was reduced to seven days in respect of each month of service.

There are many people who think an eighteen months' tour too long for the health and efficiency of European officers in West

* Some very long tours were done during the last war, but as long ago as 1929-1931 I did a tour of well over two years in Lagos.

Africa, and there is little doubt that the energy and intellectual efficiency of Europeans decline rapidly in the last few months of their tours. So much, however, depends on the individual and the type of work he is doing that it is impossible to state with any confidence what the average length of tour should be.

The coming of air travel has reduced the time that has to be spent on the voyages, but I am not at all sure that this is an advantage to the health of the officers, which is, after all, the main reason for the granting of leave. The enforced fortnight of rest on a steamer homeward bound, and the gradual approach to the colder climate during that period, must be better for the health than the hectic dash home by air, the sudden change of temperature (especially in the winter months), and the immediate plunge into the strenuous life which a holiday so often means.

One of the chief attractions of the West African Service to the individual officer is the opportunity for frequent visits home on leave; to the Service itself the repeated breaks in continuity are a great handicap. During my first period of service in Nigeria, from 1912 to 1923, I went on leave to England six times. In over forty years of colonial service I have made twenty-five sea voyages to and from West Africa, and sixteen to and from the West Indies, either on transfer or going on or returning from leave. At an average of a fortnight for each voyage I have spent some twenty months of my official life at sea, apart from certain trips that I have made by air.

During my first leave in England from West Africa I got married, and soon afterwards I heard of my transfer from the Customs Department to the Administrative Service as a Junior Assistant Secretary in the Central Secretariat. I returned to Lagos in July, 1914, and assumed duty in the Secretariat under Mr. (afterwards Sir Donald) Cameron, who was Central Secretary. The administrative arrangements made by the Governor-General,* Sir Frederick (afterwards Lord) Lugard, when Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated on the 1st January, 1914, provided for no less than four separate Secretariats. The Lieutenant-Governors of the Northern

* This title was personal to Sir Frederick Lugard; his successors had the title of Governor.

and Southern Provinces of Nigeria (which corresponded roughly to the former Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria) each had his own Secretariat, as had the Administrator of the Colony of Nigeria (roughly the original Colony of Lagos); in addition there was a Central Secretariat which dealt with matters of general interest and the business of such "central departments" as the Railway. The Governor-General dealt with the files of all these offices, and it was easy enough for different rulings to be given on different files in respect of similar problems. This organisation was changed for the better when Sir Hugh Clifford became Governor.

The outbreak of war in August, 1914, seriously interfered with Sir Frederick Lugard's schemes for united Nigeria. In Chapter X I refer to the campaign against the neighbouring German colony of the Cameroons and my own small share in it, and even when this campaign was over Nigeria had to provide troops for service in East Africa. The Civil Service supplied a large number of men for duty with the Nigeria Regiment and for war duties in other territories, about 100 officials lost their lives in torpedoed ships, and very few new appointments of European officials could be made even to replace the normal wastage. I shall have occasion to refer, in Chapter IX, to the serious effects in the Gold Coast of the shortage of staff in that colony during the second world war; it is only necessary to say here that Nigeria suffered greatly, at a critical stage in its history, from shortage of staff.

When I rejoined the Secretariat after my service in the Cameroons, I was placed in charge of the "publications" branch of that office, and was responsible for the production of the first Blue Book for Nigeria. This publication, which may have been of value when it was first started for the colonies during the last century, is of little use today. Some of the information given in it is of no value to anyone and in these days practically all the useful information it contains has already been published separately at a much earlier date than the publication of the Blue Book. In some of the smaller colonies the publication of the Blue Book is often years in arrear. Of more value is the Annual Report which is published fairly quickly after the close of the period to which it refers. I feel very strongly that these annual colonial reports, if they are to be read with interest by the general

public, should be issued without delay ; this involves, of course, the omission of detailed and accurate statistics, but such statistics are of little concern to the ordinary reader, and could be made available to those who need them in a later publication.

Frequently, in connection with my work, I had to look for statistics and other facts relating to Nigeria, and I soon realised the need for some handy volume, which, if it could not itself contain all the necessary information about Nigeria, could at least indicate where that information was to be found. I suggested to my superiors that I should compile a handbook of Nigeria, which should be published by the government for official use and sale to the public ; my suggestion was not approved and I determined, having obtained the necessary permission, to bring out a handbook as a private venture. I did not realise, at first, the difficulties of this enterprise. The information I had to collect was scattered through a variety of publications, and sometimes did not exist, while very often the "facts" I obtained from one source were contradicted by another. I worked at night, for many months, on the compilation, while my wife typed out the results. Finally, through the co-operation of the Government Printer and his staff, who were most sympathetic and helpful, the first edition of the *Nigeria Handbook* was published in 1917 ; the receipts just covered the cost of printing. Later editions, in 1919, 1921, and 1923, were more remunerative, and in 1924 the government bought the *Handbook* from me and brought it out, as it should have done from the first, as a government publication.

When I returned to Nigeria for my third tour I was accompanied by my wife. I had to obtain special permission for her to accompany me, and throughout the tour we lived in constant fear that, owing to the shortage of quarters for married men, the wife of so junior an officer would have to be sent back to England. In those days, apart from the nursing sisters and missionaries, there were very few white women in Lagos, and fewer still up-country. Many of the older officials disliked the idea of wives coming to Nigeria, on the grounds that they interfered with their husbands' work, and prevented them from travelling on duty. It is true that in a few districts it may have been unsafe to travel with one's wife, and equally unsafe to leave her in a lonely station while one travelled, but this objection did not

apply in the case of the larger towns. Here the problem was the lack of houses, and if a junior officer brought his wife with him to the country he had to be given reasonable accommodation, which meant that a more senior officer had to be content with inferior quarters—for instance, in the “Chest of Drawers.”

Occasionally, the real objection of the hardened “old coaster” was to white women as such. He regarded them as intruders into what had been essentially a bachelor’s paradise, where a man could dress as he pleased, drink as much as he liked, and be easy in his morals without causing scandal. At no time, however, did I see anything in any way resembling the life portrayed in “White Cargo,” and if these men of a previous generation were not plaster saints at any rate they did their work well, and it was they who laid the foundations on which their successors are building. Perhaps for the very reason that they had not to consider the comfort or the prejudices of white women they were always on better terms with the Africans than we are. They travelled more and saw more of the people in their villages; they visited and were visited by Africans more freely than is the case today.

From the official point of view, wives are often a nuisance in West Africa. Husbands are reluctant to take them travelling in bad country or bad weather and equally reluctant to leave them behind; therefore they travel less than they should. A wife’s illness upsets the husband and puts him off his work. A wife sometimes quarrels with her husband’s brother officers or their wives, and in a small community, where one meets socially in the evening the same people one works with during the day, this is disastrous. The ordinary difficulties of married life are intensified by the little irritations of the tropics—heat, insects, a touch of malaria, incompetent servants—or by sheer boredom on the part of the wife, who sits at home all day with very little to do while her husband is at the office, and wishes to “do something” when he comes home in the afternoon with no other desire but to rest.

But I am quite sure that even from the official point of view it is desirable that married officers in the West African service should be accompanied by their wives. The officer who has his wife with him (unless she is entirely unsuitable as a wife) lives a better and happier

life, and eats better food, than he can possibly do as a grass-widower. I attribute my own good health, after so many years' service in West Africa, to the fact that my wife was with me nearly every tour. The officer who is healthy and comfortable must be of more value to his employers than one who is worried by compulsory separation from his wife, whose servants neglect their work as soon as he leaves for the office, and whose cook serves up meals which no wife would tolerate.

As regards children I hold the opposite view. It may do no harm to very young European children to live in West Africa but even this is by no means certain ; in any case it can do them no good. They are always liable to malaria, to prickly heat and the bites of insects, and to the constant effects of a damp and hot climate. For older children, who are more difficult to control, these risks are increased. For all children the food problem is serious, as fresh milk is seldom available. I am aware that European children have lived in French colonies, and at Achimota College in the Gold Coast, for many years, and that during the last war many more have lived in West Africa and some have even been born there, but no one yet knows what effect this tropical residence in their infancy will have on these children in after life. While I consider that governments should leave the decision in this matter to the parents, I feel that governments should do nothing to encourage parents to bring their children to West Africa.

The wife who joins her husband in West Africa, and attempts for the first time to deal with the servants he has had perhaps for several years, finds herself up against many difficulties. The servants, not unnaturally, resent the presence of a mistress in the house where they have been practically uncontrolled ; they object to her insistence on cleanliness and to her interference with their accustomed slack routine. My wife was no more fortunate in this respect than others. Soon after her arrival my head boy departed without notice, and was replaced. A week or two later I received a letter from him, asking me to take him back, "as my friends tell me all Missis be the same trouble."

It is difficult to write with a balanced judgment of African boys. Some make excellent servants, honest (at any rate to their own

masters), loyal and hard-working. When travelling in "the bush" (i.e., away from headquarters stations) they are resourceful and untiring ; they like their employers to give parties and work hard to make these parties a success. I had one boy for some years who, when I was transferred to the Bahamas, worked his way on a cargo steamer across the Atlantic to join me. I sent him back to Nigeria in 1928 and he had actually started for the Bahamas once again when he heard that I was returning to Nigeria and waited in the Gold Coast until I arrived. Such loyalty covers a multitude of shortcomings. But many boys pilfer as a matter of course, they damage or destroy their employers' property through gross carelessness, and are incorrigibly lazy.

Some boys are said to be very stupid, and of course some are, but I believe that most cases of apparent stupidity are due to the fact that they do not understand what is said to them, or the reasons for the things they are told to do. For instance, a cook was once told by his employer, who fancied his own culinary knowledge, that he should put two bottles of beer in the water in which he was to boil a ham. Later, the employer went to see whether his instructions had been obeyed, and found two beer bottles floating about in the water ; their labels had been washed off and were stuck to the ham !

English is a foreign language to these boys and they are reluctant to admit that they do not understand an order. A boy will therefore make a guess at what his employer wants him to do and very often (knowing his habits) he guesses correctly. When he does not guess correctly the result is sometimes startling.

When a boy has been unable to guess what is wanted he will sometimes return, after a long interval, to ask for the order to be repeated, but nothing will induce him to do so in the first instance. I gave an order once to my boy when I was in the Gold Coast and he left the room at once, as I thought, to carry it out. What he did in fact was to go to my Private Secretary's office to ask him what I had said, although the Private Secretary could not possibly have heard me or known what I wanted.

An African's choice of English words is somewhat disconcerting. I have been told by a boy that his brother had "flogged" him, and the only injury he could show for this was a small bruise on one

finger ; another complained that he had been "slapped," with the result that his jaw was broken. A friend came to our house one evening to see us and was told by our boy that we were upstairs "undressing for dinner," which no doubt reveals the African's idea of ladies' evening dress.

In self-defence one often has to speak to Africans in that abominable language "pidgin" English, which some of them understand when everything else has failed, but I never use it without feeling ashamed of myself. It is quite unpardonable to use it, as I have heard it used, to Africans of any education. It can be extremely funny, and some Europeans are very clever at telling stories in "pidgin," but every effort should be made to stamp it out and replace it by standard (not basic) English. The word "live" (often pronounced "lib"*) is perhaps the most commonly used in "pidgin" English. The fact that the book is on the table is announced as "book live for table." If you enquire whether Mr. So-and-So lives in a certain house, and are told "No," this does not necessarily mean that it is not his house, but may only indicate that he is not actually in it at the moment. A man who is dead or dying is said to "live for die." Again, the use of the negative is confusing. If one asks, "Have you got a banana ?" and the answer is "No," a second question, "You have not got a banana ?" would draw the reply, "Yes" ; this is logical, but contrary to our idiom. One other example : the European will tell his boy to "go and find my book," and when he returns will enquire, "Did you find my book ?" to which the boy may say "Yes," but on being asked to hand it over will reply, "I find it but I no see it" ; the boy takes the word "find" to mean "search for."

There was a time when my wife was on a special diet, and was not allowed to eat anything for breakfast but a lightly boiled egg. I came down one morning before she did and was half-way through a large omelette when she appeared, to be told by the boy that there was no egg for her. When I wrathfully enquired why the eggs used for my omelette had not been kept for my wife, as I could have eaten something else, I received the shattering reply that the eggs in my omelette were bad and so could not be boiled.

* Boys find it difficult also to pronounce words ending with the sound of "let," such as cutlet, omelette, sparklet, and singlet, which become "cutleg," "omeleg," "sparkleg" and "singleg."

The African seldom eats eggs himself, and wonders at the white men's liking for them. His dislike for eggs is probably due to his inability to distinguish between good and bad ones, but I have read in a book by an African author that his people "didn't eat eggs except for those the hen did not hatch."* European officers travelling in the bush often receive as a present a calabash full of eggs, which have been collected over a period of weeks for such a purpose. My cook once told me that out of a present of over 100 eggs, 20 were good, 40 were bad, and the rest were not fit to be eaten ; the bad ones, no doubt, were used for omelettes !

* *My Africa*, by Mbonu Ojike, p. 44.

CHAPTER III

NIGERIA (*continued*)

LAGOS when I first knew it towards the end of 1912 was a very different place from the great city that exists today. The present European residential area at Ikoyi did not then exist. Apapa, which now has wharfage accommodation for large ships, a railway terminus (and had, for a time, an air-field), was then little more than a swamp. Iddo was still an island,* and the population of Lagos was still comparatively small. Most of the European officials lived in houses around the race-course, in Force Road (then a very fashionable centre), and along the banks of Five Cowrie Creek. The merchants lived over their places of business in the town. Nearly all the African inhabitants lived on Lagos island itself, the Yaba suburb not being yet in existence. The Lagos Club, a sanctuary for "men only," occupied a site now covered by the African hospital. It was conveniently situated next door to the Public Buildings, and it was not unknown for men from the Secretariat and other offices to go there at about eleven o'clock on some mornings, no doubt in order to discuss in that pleasanter atmosphere some of the more knotty official problems. One fine morning a friend and I had gone across to the club for the afore-mentioned purpose and were spotted by the eagle eye of a high official, who hurried round to the Central Secretary to report us. Our chief replied that we had probably gone for a glass of beer, and that he thought it was very wrong of us (which encouraged the tale-bearer), as we had not had the courtesy to invite him to come also. He knew quite well that we would more than make up for any time lost through our absence from the office, but he pointed out to us later that we were setting a bad example to the clerks, as indeed we were.

The Central Secretariat, which later became the Nigerian Secretariat, had the great advantage of being started and controlled for many years by Sir Donald Cameron, afterwards Governor in turn of Tanganyika and Nigeria. - We had to work very hard, and for very long hours,

* It is now connected with the mainland by a causeway, which replaced the former bridge.

and our work was measured by the very high standard set by our chief himself. He suffered no fool gladly, and quickly got rid of those who failed to reach the standard. With Sir Hugh Clifford as Governor (from 1919 to 1925) and Sir Donald Cameron as Chief Secretary, the staff of the Nigerian Secretariat received such a training as is seldom given to younger officers. No less than six members of that office were at one time serving simultaneously as Governors of various colonies,* while one was an Assistant Under Secretary of State for the Colonies.†

At first the Nigerian Secretariat included a Secretary for Native Affairs, but later the fact was recognised that the Lieutenant-Governors, or the Chief Commissioners as these officers were later called, must be the advisers to the Governor on all "native affairs," without any criticism of their advice by an officer junior to themselves. When I was Governor of the Gold Coast I had the post of Secretary for Native Affairs in that colony abolished for the same reason.

The relationship between the Secretariat and the rest of the Service in a colony often leaves much to be desired. The Secretariat is the Governor's office, and the head of it, whether he is called Colonial Secretary or Chief Secretary, is the Governor's principal adviser, and usually administers the government when the Governor is on leave. The Colonial Secretary has in theory no authority except such as he exercises in the Governor's name and "by direction." But the Colonial Secretary and his subordinates must in practice take a great deal of responsibility, and issue instructions in matters of comparative detail, without the knowledge of the Governor, who could not possibly deal himself with the mass of correspondence passing through the Secretariat. With an experienced and well-trained Secretariat staff this presents little difficulty, as decisions are only taken without the Governor's knowledge in matters on which his views are known, or in pursuance of approved policy. On minor matters also, where there is substantial agreement between the Secretariat and the department or individual concerned, there is no objection to approval

* Sir Donald Cameron, Sir Shenton Thomas, Sir Selwyn Grier, Sir Douglas Jardine, Sir Henry Moore, and Sir Alan Burns. Sir Hubert Stevenson also served in the Nigerian Secretariat.

† Sir George Tomlinson.

being given without the Governor's covering sanction. But it is clear that no matters of general policy should be decided without reference to the Governor, and that the considered views of responsible departmental or administrative officers should not be over-ruled without the Governor's approval. Another matter to which (as Governor) I attached great importance was that I should be kept informed of what was going on, not necessarily by official minutes ; the Colonial Secretary sees the Governor frequently, and his office is generally connected with that of the Governor by a private telephone line.

In some colonies, and I regret to say in Nigeria after Sir Hugh Clifford's strong hand had been removed, the relationship between the Secretariat and the principal administrative and departmental officers was sometimes deplorable. This is often due to nothing more than personal antipathy, but more frequently it is caused by the Colonial Secretary, or members of his staff, adopting an unsympathetic attitude in correspondence or conversation. I was trained in the Nigerian Secretariat (and it has been my endeavour to pass on this training*) to consider it the duty of a Secretariat officer to be the friend and helper of all other officers, to refrain from sarcastic or critical marginal comments on letters received in the Secretariat (these comments come sooner or later to the ears of those concerned), and to reply politely and as sympathetically as possible to all letters, and especially when turning down requests or recommendations. The Secretariat officer, who has seen previous correspondence and precedents, often knows much more than another officer regarding a subject under discussion, but this is a reason for being helpful and no excuse for impatience or discourtesy. But the Secretariat officer, knowledgeable as he may be in the matter of rules and precedents, sometimes has little knowledge of problems which arise in "the bush," and little sympathy for the officer who has to deal with them ; and it is this lack of sympathy which provokes the not infrequent anti-Secretariat complex which one finds in stations away from headquarters.

The question of staffing a Secretariat in a large colony presents

* See Appendix A for instructions I issued for the guidance of the Gold Coast Secretariat.

many difficulties. A man who has served all his time in a Secretariat is apt to get into a rut, to value the written word in a minute paper above the subject with which it deals, and to be out of touch with realities. (I have heard the same criticism levelled at the staff of the Colonial Office.) He is said also to lack sympathy with the men "in the bush," but although most of my service has been in the Secretariat I plead not guilty to this charge at least. In the interests of the officer himself it is urged that a man should not be kept too long in the Secretariat, as, lacking experience of district work, he is unfitted for promotion when the time comes. For this reason there has grown up a system of (in my view) too frequent changes of Secretariat staffs, Administrative Officers being brought into the Secretariat for one or two years and then returned to district work.* A proportion of these temporary men is inevitable, and indeed desirable, in order that their suitability for Secretariat work may be ascertained, but I hold very strongly that every Secretariat should contain a solid core of experienced Secretariat officers, trained in their work for many years, and looking for promotion in their own line. It is not difficult for a junior officer to do a "schedule" of work in a Secretariat with little or no training, and with apparent success, but his errors come home to roost perhaps a year later, and although none of them may be very serious the aggregate is a heavy handicap to the efficiency of the office. Above all, I hold that no young officer should be attached to the Secretariat in his first tour of service†; this gives him a very false idea of his own importance, while the flesh-pots of headquarters spoil him (and his wife, if he has one) for future life in the districts.

* "Our evidence has shown that it is the generally recognised practice of Colonial Governments to staff the Secretariat from the Administrative officers of the local Service, without constituting a distinct Secretariat Service. We are satisfied that in practice it has been found that the eligibility of an Administrative Officer for promotion in another Dependency is considerably enhanced—especially in the case of senior appointments—if he has had local Secretariat experience. . . . We recommend that every encouragement should be given to the fullest interchange in practice between the Secretariat and the rest of the Administrative staff, and that to the utmost possible extent a spell of Secretariat duty should be given to all officers of the Administrative Service who are judged to have an inclination and capacity for that type of work." Report of a Committee on the system of appointment in the Colonial Office and the Colonial Services, Cmd. 3554, p. 38. See also Cmd. 3628, p. 94.

† Or to the Colonial Office until he has served in a Colony.

The whole Administrative Service is disliked by many officers in the departments, and especially by those who suffer from an inferiority complex. There is no doubt that some Administrative Officers put on side, but I think this is the exception rather than the rule, and on the whole the Administrative and departmental officers get on well enough in the districts. The attitude of the departmental to the Administrative Officer, and of the Administrative Officer in a district to his brother in the Secretariat, is not unlike that traditionally held by a regimental officer towards officers on the staff, and with as little reason.

A great deal is heard of the circumlocution and red tape of government departments, and in the colonies these are believed to be the special characteristics of the Secretariat. I do not believe that red tape is peculiar to government departments, and I have come across bad examples of it in large commercial organisations. Nor is circumlocution the prerogative of a Secretariat officer. There is, of course, the officer whose chief idea is to pass on the file with as little delay as possible and whose minute seldom contains anything more helpful than "passed to you," which so many people believe to be main contents of every file. There is also the officer who tries to be helpful by paraphrasing in his minute a letter in the file which his superior officer could read quite easily without this help. But the good Secretariat officer, who indicates clearly all relevant precedents and possible repercussions which might follow a particular decision, and suggests the appropriate reply to a letter, is more common than people believe. The trouble in Secretariats, as in all offices, is that only general instructions can, as a rule, be given, their application being left to common sense. In a circular minute which I issued in the Gold Coast, when I was Governor there, I wrote :

"Officers must, of course, be guided by the instructions they receive and the rules that have been laid down, but they must use their own common sense in the application of these rules and instructions to special circumstances, and not allow their initiative to be strangled by red tape ; the principal merit of red tape is that it can easily be cut."

I have the happiest recollections of the years I spent in the Nigerian Secretariat, and of the good fellows, Europeans and Africans, who

were my colleagues. I had frequent disagreements, on official matters, with one (considerably my senior) who afterwards became a distinguished Governor. He thought that he was being firm in argument while I was merely pig-headed : my ideas on the subject were the exact reverse. But however much we might disagree in the office we remained friends at all times, and he never failed to telephone my wife and invite us both to dinner after an argument ; in fact, my wife could always tell, by the receipt of this invitation, that there had been a row in the office.

The messengers in the Secretariat were nearly all old soldiers of the Nigeria Regiment, first-class men in their way, but quite illiterate and therefore rather a trial. One of them used to wear a woollen cap when sitting on the verandah outside the Chief Secretary's office, and he would remove this cap before entering the office. One day he forgot, in his hurry to answer the bell, to remove his cap, and was much upset when he discovered that he had committed what he considered a gross breach of manners. Ever afterwards he had his cap secured by a piece of red tape to a hook on the wall, in such a way that when he got up to answer a summons the cap was automatically jerked off his head.

Nigeria, when I first knew it, contained some remarkable characters. Mary Slessor, a Scottish factory girl, joined the Presbyterian Mission in 1876 and worked in Nigeria until her death in 1915. She had a great influence among the people and was actually for a time the President of a Native Court. Her most spectacular successes were in the saving of twins and their mothers. In that part of the country in which she worked the birth of twins was regarded with horror and alarm, and public opinion considered it essential that both twins should be killed, or at least abandoned in the bush to die, and that the mother should be driven from her home. Mary Slessor saved numbers of twins from death and adopted them herself. She was a good and simple lady whom it was a privilege to know, and loved by Europeans and Africans alike.

A different type was the District Commissioner who was universally known as "Rustybuckle." He was efficient enough at running a bush district, although his eccentricities would not be condoned in these less tolerant days. Many amusing stories are told

of him. On one occasion, when he was being rebuked by the Governor on the deck of a river steamer on the Niger for one of his pranks, he cried out that he could stand no more and, jumping over the side, disappeared from view. The Governor, and everyone else on board, leant over the side from which he had jumped, anxiously scanning the water for a sign of him, while a boat was hurriedly lowered. In the meantime, Rustybuckle, a grand swimmer, had swum under the keel of the vessel and reboarded it on the other side, where no one was looking; the Governor, repenting aloud of the words which as he supposed had driven Rustybuckle to his death, was relieved to hear his voice, apologising for the interruption.

On another occasion, Rustybuckle, wearing a long grey beard, joined a homeward bound steamer at Calabar and, while some nursing sisters were dressing in their cabin, put his head in their cabin door, wagged his beard at them, and fled to his cabin where he hurriedly shaved. Later, he was foremost in the search for the ruffian of whom the nursing sisters complained, and delicately suggested, when the miscreant could not be found, that the ladies were, in fact, imagining things. Everyone else in the ship knew the truth, and so, in the end, did the nursing sisters, who forgave him. He once made a bet of £5 with his own cousin, who should have known him well enough to have been more careful, that he could stand punishment better than the other. To settle the bet they were each in turn to lie on the deck of the steamer in which they were travelling, and be flogged by the other with a rope. Rustybuckle so arranged things that his cousin took the first flogging and when it was his turn, pressed a £5 note into his cousin's hand, murmuring, "you win."

Yet another character was an Englishman who lived for many years in Lagos, and "went native" to such an extent that he committed suicide in the end in the local style, by cutting himself across the stomach, an unpleasant way out of life which would never occur to the ordinary Englishman contemplating self-murder.

In 1918 I had the great privilege of being appointed to Sir Frederick Lugard's personal staff as Aide-de-Camp, and for some of the time as Private Secretary. He was a delightful chief to work for, and, on the rare occasions when he could be persuaded to speak of

them, his early adventures in Africa were thrilling to listen to. He was a tremendous worker and grudged every moment spent away from his desk ; night after night he went to his office immediately after dinner and worked there until one or two o'clock in the morning. He was a great man and a great governor, but he was unable to leave details to his subordinates and wasted much of his time on trifling work which others could have done for him. As a result his desk was always overcrowded with papers, through which he worked steadily but slowly. Many a time, at the suggestion of impatient Secretariat officers, I have moved an urgent file to the top of the pile of papers on his desk, only to find it replaced later in the exact position from which I had moved it.

Sir Frederick was once advised by the doctor to take more exercise, and it was suggested that he should play tennis for an hour twice a week. This advice was followed with great precision ; at five o'clock in the afternoon he began to play, and at six o'clock, even in the middle of a game, he put down his racquet and returned to his office. His favourite exercise was walking—very fast.

Every morning, for some time, he had a wing of chicken for his breakfast, and the Aide-de-Camp was assured by his boy that that was what he wanted. One day, for some reason, no chicken wing was available and he had to eat bacon and eggs instead. The Aide-de-Camp apologised for this departure from precedent and was surprised to hear from him that he was delighted with the change, that he had once said that he would like a chicken wing for breakfast and had been given it ever since, and that it was because he did not wish to give extra trouble that he had accepted the position in silence. He was like that.

As A.D.C. it was my business to run the house-keeping and I am afraid that I was not much of a success at it. One day at luncheon Sir Frederick asked me why we never had avocado pears. I had not the least idea, but ventured the suggestion that they were out of season. Unfortunately, the boys had overheard the conversation and passed the word to the cook, who produced some avocado pears next day. When he saw them Lugard asked me whether I had not said that they were out of season and I had to admit this, adding

hastily that they might just then be coming into season, which appeared to satisfy him.

He was devoted to Lady Lugard, who, being an invalid, was unable to join him in Nigeria. Every week they exchanged telegrams, and if her telegram was a day or two late in arriving, as sometimes happened during the war, he was distracted with anxiety. He had a warm affection for the men who had served with him in Northern Nigeria in the early days, and to them, and indeed to all of us who ever worked under him, he was an inspiration. Always spoken of affectionately as "the little man," he was never little in anything but stature.

Lugard was succeeded as Governor of Nigeria in 1919 by Sir Hugh Clifford, his opposite in many ways. Clifford was a large man, who loved the ceremonial and social side of his duties just as much as Lugard had hated it. Instead of working from dinner-time to the small hours of the morning, Clifford worked from the small hours until breakfast-time. He was a good office man, and he reorganised the machinery of government so that it worked more efficiently. He worked hard and played hard, and his tremendous energy allowed him to do both. Lady Clifford saw to the refurnishing of Government House, which was something like a barn when she arrived, and the style of entertaining at Government House was much improved. The African public liked the more showy official ceremonies, and we all appreciated the personality and powers of oratory of the new Governor.

With my previous knowledge of Government House and of the arrangements to be made when the Governor went on tour, I was often asked to help, and from time to time I acted as Clifford's Private Secretary. As he and I were Catholics, and his official A.D.C. was not, I was asked to accompany him to church every Sunday morning; he, and therefore I, always went in uniform. The reason for the wearing of uniform on these occasions was typical of Sir Hugh Clifford. It is usual in the colonies, when the King's Representative arrives at a Catholic Church, for him to be met by a priest and acolytes at the door of the church and escorted to his seat; the priests in Lagos had no experience of this and, without the

slightest intention of being discourteous, omitted to receive the Governor in the proper way when he went to church on the first Sunday after his arrival. A "strong" letter from Sir Hugh Clifford to the Bishop led to a somewhat acrimonious correspondence, in which the Governor, who was knowledgeable in such matters, reminded the Bishop of the rubrics on the subject, which he had forgotten, if he ever knew them. Realising that the rubrics supported the Governor's view, but reluctant to give way entirely, the Bishop agreed that he should be received with full ceremony if he came officially, i.e., in uniform, and got away with it ! When I became a Governor I never went to church in uniform except on very special occasions, but there was never any difficulty over my reception.

When Sir Donald Cameron, as Chief Secretary, administered the government of Nigeria during the absence of the Governor on leave, I acted again as Private Secretary and A.D.C., continuing with my work in the Secretariat at the same time, so far as that was possible. As Lady Cameron did most of the house-keeping, and Sir Donald Cameron depended very little on his Private Secretary, it was possible for me, except when the acting-Governor was on tour, to combine these duties.

One of the most insistent problems with which every Governor is faced is the finding of a satisfactory personal staff. Governors sometimes select members of the Civil Service in the colony as Private Secretary and A.D.C., and this has the great advantage that an unsatisfactory selection need not be a permanent embarrassment, as the officer concerned can easily be returned to his substantive duties. To a newly-appointed Governor, an officer already acquainted with the country and the people in it can be invaluable. On the other hand, a local officer sees and hears much regarding his superiors that may affect discipline in later years, and a good officer's time is wasted, in some ways, at Government House. In other ways the experience is good for a young officer, and I for one realise how much I learned by serving on the personal staff of three great Governors. The alternative is the selection of men in no way connected with the colony, but too often such appointments of entirely untried men prove unsuccessful. They may be pleasant enough as

companions but quite incompetent : or they may be good at their work but unpleasant to live with.

The great advantage of serving on a Governor's staff is that the junior officer meets many interesting persons he would not otherwise meet, and travels over the whole country. In this way I have visited nearly every station in Nigeria at one time or another, and had my interest in the country stimulated. This led to my reading books and old records, and acquiring a knowledge of the past history of Nigeria which was to prove useful later.

Life in tropical colonies offers the advantages of cheap and easily arranged games. Polo in Nigeria was probably less expensive than in any other country, and was played at Lagos and many of the other stations, especially those in the Northern Provinces. Cricket matches were often arranged, the great event of the year being the annual match between Nigerian and Gold Coast Europeans. Association football is popular, in spite of the heat, and even rugger has been played at Lagos in the rainy season—but not for long. The Africans take naturally to soccer, playing as a rule with bare feet ; they are very quick, and usually beat European teams, which are not so good in a fast game on a warm afternoon. Lawn tennis is, however, the most popular game among Europeans ; in Lagos we were fortunate in having excellent grass courts at the tennis club, of which I was honorary secretary for several years. My first visit to Accra was to play in the annual tennis match between Nigeria and the Gold Coast, and I remember that we found the hard earth courts of Accra very difficult to play on after being accustomed to grass in Lagos. The Africans, who could hardly play tennis at all when I first went to Lagos, have improved considerably at the game, and there are now some excellent African players.

After tennis in Lagos, in the early days, a few men would drift round to the Lagos Club (rudely known as the "Gin Tank") from which women were rigidly excluded, and here they would play bridge or billiards until dinner-time. Most of us, however, used to visit one another's houses, for "small chop" and a drink. In pidgin English all food is "chop," and "small chop" consists of hors d'oeuvres ; it was a point of honour to invent, from time to time, a new kind of "small chop." It was only after the Ikoyi Club came

into being, as a meeting place for men and women alike, that the habit of giving "small chop" parties began to die out ; it is not quite dead yet. These parties afforded a pleasant way of passing the time between games and dinner, the coolest hours of the day, and I can remember many a happy evening on a friend's lawn, spent in furious but amicable argument, and the discussion of what was the most interesting subject of all, the work we were doing. As a rule these parties were composed entirely of Europeans, but occasionally Africans would join us, such men as Sir Kitoyi Ajasa and Dr. Henry Carr, who were always welcome.

Criticism is often levelled at the "European" club in West Africa on account of the exclusion of Africans from membership. I do not consider that such criticisms are justified, and unfortunate as it may be that Africans should be excluded, I believe that worse results would follow their admission at the present time, especially if this were due to official pressure. These clubs are, after all, associations of men and women with the same background and interests, and are designed for the recreation of mind and body. Such associations exist everywhere, and membership is usually confined to those who belong to the same political party, nationality, or class, or to those who are interested in the same form of sport, or art, or literature. European clubs in West Africa are no more unreasonable than are British clubs in the United States or American clubs in Great Britain. It is not unnatural that Englishmen should wish to spend their leisure hours in the company of their own compatriots, who are inarticulate in the same way, use the same slang, and understand the same allusions. The introduction of any alien element into this company necessitates some effort, if only the relaxation of insular taciturnity. If Africans were to join the party the effort would have to be greater, for, apart from mere politeness, the European has then to be careful to say and do nothing which could conceivably hurt the feelings of persons suffering, as most Africans do, from an inferiority complex. A careless remark or a casual gesture, unintentional and of no significance, might easily be taken for a deliberate slight by persons on the look-out for insults, and the European for his part might well resent having to keep this close check on his own behaviour at a time when he is "off duty." Again, leaving out the question of deliberate

rudeness (the possibility of which should not, however, be excluded), a real though unintentional slight might do greater harm to inter-racial relations than is done by the exclusion of Africans from clubs. Until a greater number of Africans have shaken off, through better education, the inferiority complex which is now so common, it would be far safer to allow present conditions to continue. I do not believe, in any case, that many Africans today wish to join the European clubs. The educated African does not appear to be very "club-minded." They start very few social clubs among themselves, and few of those that are started survive for very long. In Accra there is a very good African club, started by the government many years ago and housed in a building provided by the government, but it is little used except for dancing, the most popular form of recreation among educated Africans.*

In my view there is an opening in the larger centres for social clubs where Africans and Europeans could meet, and play tennis and other games together. Membership of such clubs would be confined to those persons of both races who really wished to meet one another, and I have always found that sport is the most effective bridge between the races. In a later chapter† I refer to the Lagos Dining Club, of which I was one of the founders. This club was comprised of an equal number of Europeans and Africans and I believe that it did a lot of good; if I had stayed longer in Nigeria I should have tried to expand it.

As to the value of clubs to Europeans in West Africa I have no doubt whatever. They break down cliques which are so harmful in stations, and they offer relief to the lonely man separated from his family. If a club provides meals for its members (most West African clubs unfortunately do not) it ensures that the bachelor or grass-widower is reasonably fed, and saves him from the tender mercies of a cook who is probably inefficient. It would be far better if junior European officials could be accommodated in small flats close to the clubs, where they could get their meals, than in separate bungalows which require larger staffs than the officers can or should afford.

* I refer here to "European" and not to "Native" dances. See p. 216.

† See p. 107.

The provision of free furnished quarters was formerly part of the emoluments of European officers in West Africa. Where no quarters were available and the officer had to live in a "bush house," generally built of mud with a thatched roof (which is populated by snakes and insects of various sorts), an allowance in lieu of quarters was paid. Many officers preferred to draw this allowance than to live in proper quarters, and I should certainly prefer to live in a well-built "bush house" than in some bungalows I have known. The government bungalows are, as a rule, badly designed, and compare unfavourably with the bungalows provided by most of the European firms for their employees. The earlier bungalows were designed for single men, at a time when few wives came to the country, and most of the men of those days were content to camp out in them and to accept discomforts which seemed inevitable in West Africa. But even in later years, when bungalows were being designed for married couples, too little attention was paid to comfort. The "T₁" and "T₂" bungalows in Nigeria were comfortable, but were considered to be too expensive and cheaper designs were adopted later. In the Gold Coast, when I arrived there in 1941, the housing was deplorable. Although modern sanitation was provided in almost all the bungalows belonging to the commercial firms, and in the houses of Achimota College, there was not a single government bungalow in Accra which had this amenity. In Government House the arrangements were of the most primitive kind, and during the first few months after my arrival, until I had the necessary changes made, it was most embarrassing to have guests staying in the house.

The bad housing in West Africa is due partly to a lack of imagination on the part of those responsible for the buildings, but principally to the very high cost of construction. The first handicap could be overcome by the appointment of standing committees, which should include ladies with some experience of life in West Africa, to consider the design and siting of bungalows, and the types of furniture to be provided. The second handicap is more serious, as governments must limit the cost of bungalows, and it appears impossible, under existing conditions, to build cheaply. On account of the damage that can be done by termites (the "white

ants") wooden buildings are bad investments, and the cost of maintenance is high ; moreover, governments are prone to make the serious mistake of "economising," in times of financial stringency, by neglecting maintenance.* The alternative is the use of permanent materials, brick, stone, or reinforced concrete. Bricks are generally too expensive in West Africa and stone is not often available near the larger towns (Lagos, for example†) ; there remains nothing but concrete, and the Public Works Departments seem unable to build cheaply in concrete. It has been maintained that contractors can build more cheaply but this is denied by officials of the Public Works Department. It has been held that the Public Works Departments, to keep on the safe side, build too strongly and waste money in so doing ; they reply that a safety margin is essential in building.

My personal view is that the Public Works Departments should have as their main functions the preparation of plans and the supervision and inspection of work done by contractors. I realise that in some of the smaller colonies there is an absence of qualified contractors, but this may be due to the existence of the government departments which carry out all the major works and leave no opening for private enterprise. It is the usual vicious circle ; Public Works Departments exist because there are no contractors, and there are no contractors because the Departments exist. Colonial governments should break the circle.

There is the same sort of difficulty with regard to hotels. No good hotels exist in the British West African colonies because it is the custom for European residents there to offer hospitality to any visiting Europeans, whether known to them or not. But this hospitality is offered because, in the absence of a hotel, there is no alternative. Colonial hospitality is proverbial, but it imposes a heavy burden on the residents in the colonies. It is a financial burden which should not be imposed on junior officers with small salaries, as it so often is. Some of the visitors to West Africa, who write

* A clear example of this was provided by the condition of all government buildings in British Honduras when I arrived there in 1934 ; from a mistaken sense of economy none of the wooden buildings had been painted for some years, with the result that much money had to be spent on repairs as well as painting.

† All the stone used for the construction of the great moles at the mouth of Lagos harbour had to be brought by rail for a distance of sixty miles.

afterwards of their travels in the "White Man's Grave," are apt to forget that they have acquired their experience at the expense of others ; they often forget even the existence of those others. I have never been able to understand why the traveller in West Africa (or other tropical countries) should expect to receive hospitality from total strangers, and (still more strange—but true) should resent it if, for any reason, such hospitality should not be offered. Some of these gentlemen (and ladies) would be greatly surprised if West African officials who had entertained them in West Africa should invite themselves to be their guests during their infrequent visits to England. Quite apart from the financial burden, it is often a great inconvenience, in a small house, to be called upon to entertain a guest at short notice, and it is a strain on busy men to have to make arrangements for visitors whom they have never met and with whom they have nothing in common.

During the last war, when West Africa became an important air route, the difficulties were greatly accentuated. Besides increased costs, there was a definite shortage of many kinds of groceries, and liquor of every kind was rationed in such a way that the arrival of a thirsty visitor was a serious menace to his host's quota. But the most serious burden was the endless stream of visitors coming and going, day and night (literally), by aeroplane. All of these visitors were of some standing or they would not have been given air passages in those difficult days,* but some of them were not quite as important as they thought. It was sometimes extremely difficult to assess their relative importance ; those thought the more important were invited to stay at Government House, while the others had to stay in less luxurious surroundings, and did not like it. The strain on their hosts (and hostesses) was tremendous, and at least one Governor's health was seriously affected by the responsibilities of enforced hospitality at a time when war conditions made his office work more onerous than usual. When I acted as Governor of Nigeria in 1942 there was a period of more than six weeks when every bed in the house was occupied every night ; as one guest left another took his place. Most of our guests were delightful, and we

* I am bound to confess, however, that in certain cases I was unable to appreciate the importance of some of the air-borne travellers, such for instance as the lady secretaries of some of our visitors.

enjoyed having them ; others, who regarded Government House as a hotel in which they were entitled to stay, were less attractive. It is a remarkable fact that those who were most clearly entitled, on the grounds of their rank or position, to official hospitality, were the most diffident in accepting it, and the most grateful for the entertainment they received ; but perhaps this is not so remarkable after all. It is scarcely credible, but I have known people who have complained loudly because they were not asked to stay at Government House. I regard this as sheer impertinence, but it is in keeping with the attitude of many travellers who regard it as their right that they should be invited to stay with the Governor of any Colony which they may honour by visiting.

The entertainment of one's brother officers, or members of the same Service from other colonies, is a very different matter, and I have the most pleasant recollections of guests who have stayed with us from time to time. Sometimes they were men from up-country, taking local leave in Lagos, or passing through on their way to or from leave in England. Sometimes they were men from the Gold Coast, come to play tennis or cricket against Nigeria in the annual competitions. They appreciated the hospitality offered them, and returned it many times over when they had the chance. These inter-colonial matches with the Gold Coast were great fun, especially to those who were lucky enough to get into a team visiting Accra. The disappointment when rain interfered with play was intense, but as the dates for the matches were carefully fixed these tragedies were uncommon.

One advantage of West Africa is that the seasons are clearly marked, not by changes of temperature (the difference between hot and very hot is not great), but by rainfall. In the dry season it very seldom rains, and in some of the inland stations it actually does not rain at all for months on end. At Maidugari, for instance, for many years, there was not a single drop of rain during the five months November to March. In Lagos the average annual rainfall is a little more than 70 inches, and more than half of this falls during the three months May to July. In the Niger delta the annual rainfall averages over 150 inches. There are some years when the rains are particularly heavy ; in 1917, in Lagos, 115 inches fell, and at Bonny, in 1921,

there was a record of 245 inches. On the slopes of the Cameroons mountain the annual rainfall is sometimes as much as 400 inches ! It is impossible to describe adequately the effect of a *really* rainy day in one of these places. The rain pours down for hours on end without any pause, the roofs of the bungalows almost invariably leak, and even when they do not there is a pervading dampness everywhere ; closed windows and the absence of sun cause a gloom both physical and mental. After months during which the heat of the sun has been declared to be intolerable there is an earnest desire for a little sunshine.

During the dry season there occurs the *Harmattan*, a dry, northeasterly wind which brings with it a thick haze, composed of minute particles of sand and shell from the Sahara. During the *Harmattan* the nights and early mornings are cold, but the days are very hot, especially in the northern parts of the country where the *Harmattan* is more severe. Some people suffer from the effects of the fine dust which gets into their eyes, nose and throat. The dryness of the atmosphere during this period is intense, and at night one is frequently startled by loud reports or more mysterious noises made by the furniture affected by the sudden changes of temperature. The *Harmattan* haze is a serious handicap to aviators, as the ground is quite invisible from a couple of thousand feet up. I flew once from Pointe Noire, in French Equatorial Africa, to Accra, on the Gold Coast, without a sight of land or sea until we descended through the *Harmattan* haze over the Accra airport ; the navigator of the aeroplane had done a good piece of work.

Immediately before and after the rainy season there is a short tornado season. The West African tornado is not as serious as it sounds, and is, in fact, little more than a heavy squall, accompanied and followed by a thunderstorm and rain. Before a tornado the air is oppressively close and heavy ; afterwards it is delightfully cool. Very little damage is done by the average tornado, but occasionally one more severe than usual will blow off the corrugated roof of a small house or blow down a tree. I have known the wind and rain combine to destroy the badly-built mud wall of a rest-house, to the great discomfort of the temporary inmate (myself), and there was once a prison, built of mud, so badly damaged that the prisoners declared

they would escape if a proper prison were not built for them at once.

There are many good (and true) stories about West African prisoners. One man, whom I had rebuked for not working hard enough on a task he had been given, informed me in a condescending way that he had been sentenced to penal servitude and not to hard labour. A notorious burglar, serving a long sentence, was let out at night to pursue his profession, sharing the spoils with his complaisant warders until a quarrel among the warders themselves gave the show away; he was several times seen and recognised by his victims, but had, of course, a perfect alibi. The "senior prisoner" in a gang is sometimes a man of standing, and not infrequently addressed as "Sir" by the warders, who are often illiterate and not over-intelligent. It was in British Honduras, however, that the Superintendent of Prisons, on a round of visits to gangs working outside the walls, came on a solitary warder, who briskly saluted and gave the formal report, "All correct, sir," adding, almost as an afterthought, "except that all the prisoners have run away."

The overcrowding in many of the West African prisons is always serious, and when I went later to the Gold Coast as Governor this was a matter which caused me much concern. I was fortunate in getting a competent and progressive Director of Prisons, who effected many reforms. One of the greatest difficulties lies in the attitude of the people themselves, who consider a prison sentence a misfortune rather than a disgrace. Their attitude to wrong-doers generally is difficult to understand. While they evince little sympathy for a stranger from another tribe or country, they will do all in their power to defend one of their own neighbours from the consequences of his misdeeds, and will treat him as a martyr rather than a criminal when he is convicted even of anti-social offences against their own interests. There is no public opinion which condemns crime in itself and until such public opinion can be created the effects of prison sentences are of little value.

Too often the prosecution of an African is regarded as persecution by the Europeans, although the white men are acting merely as the instruments of justice and authority. It is perhaps this racial solidarity which causes the law-abiding African to sympathise with his erring brother, but I suspect that it is more often a lack of moral

courage. In Lagos some years ago certain African lawyers were accused of irregular conduct which seriously affected the interests of their African clients; throughout the proceedings which followed almost universal sympathy was expressed for them by Press and public, and there were great rejoicings when a remarkably light penalty was imposed on only one of them. A Nigerian newspaper has pointed out that even a term of imprisonment for such anti-social crimes as "bribery, embezzlement, and even petty theft" seldom affects the social standing of the culprit.* I refer in a later chapter† to the attitude taken up by the Accra public in connection with the trial of a lawyer-politician.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the people of Accra and the Gold Coast generally were delighted with the verdict of murder brought in by the jury (composed of six Africans and one European) in a case where a minor chief had been sacrificed, in 1944, in connection with the funeral ceremonies of the late Sir Ofori Atta.‡ Several reasons have been suggested to me for the unusual attitude of the people towards the accused in this case. One suggestion was that public opinion condemned the killing of a chief§; another that the scandal destroyed the prestige of a family which had for too long enjoyed an excess of power in the political life of the colony; yet another, that the case was not so much one of human sacrifice as the cold-blooded murder of a man who knew too much about some irregular financial transactions. It has even been hinted that, although the sacrifice of a chief was ritually necessary, the wrong chief had been murdered.

That human sacrifice was a common practice in West Africa in former years has never been disputed, and many people believe that it still continues, in spite of British law and the efforts of the British administrations to stamp it out; in spite also of the spread of Christianity and education, and the number of educated Africans

* See article in the *Nigerian Eastern Mail*, reproduced in *West Africa* of 13th August, 1938.

† See p. 282.

‡ See p. 219.

§ It was generally believed that many other persons had been sacrificed in connection with the same funeral ceremonies, but as they were only "strangers" of the labouring class, public opinion was not shocked.

who share our form of civilisation. There is no doubt also that cannibalism still exists, especially among the more primitive tribes of the Bauchi plateau in Nigeria, and that an African of the educated class can very easily throw off the civilisation he has acquired and revert to primitive ways. There have been instances of this in the past and a glaring example as late as 1944. But more serious than anything else is the lack of a healthy public opinion to which I have referred above, and the lack of simple honesty among so many Africans in responsible positions.

What is the answer to all this? The African and his unthinking friends will say that the whole community must not be judged by the conduct of a few; with this I agree, but *are* there only a few who are uncivilised and dishonest? Are there only a few who lack the moral courage to stand boldly against admitted evils? How many Africans will trust one another in business? It does no good to the African or to anyone else to ignore cold facts, and to say that all is well when we know that there is a great deal that is wrong. I believe that more harm is done to the African by sentimental well-wishers and Negrophiles than is done by anyone else today. The African who gets a University degree is hailed by certain journals and individuals as a paragon of learning; the African who gets called to the Bar is referred to in such glowing terms that he might be pardoned for considering himself already an eminent lawyer. The demand that such men should be placed immediately in positions of trust and responsibility shows a kind heart (and no doubt earns popularity) but generally argues a lack of serious thought.

Throughout my colonial service I have endeavoured to help the people, whether in West Africa or the West Indies, and I have many friends among them. I do not believe that many would accuse me of an anti-African bias. No doubt I have been guilty of flattering speeches, but I think there are times when a little gentle flattery is desirable. But I have never hesitated to say what I think of the African when that was necessary, and to point out his faults when the occasion arose.* I should have been a poor friend of the African

* The truth is often unpalatable, and I was taken to task by a Member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council for stating in a public speech that Cape Coast had a record for disorder and lawlessness worse than that of any other town in the Colony. Everyone knew that this was true.

otherwise. After all, the African is no fool, and he knows that he is no more perfect than anyone else. He has his virtues—many of them—but he also has his shortcomings, and it does no good to flatter him with assertions to the contrary, or, alternatively, to attribute all these shortcomings to the evil influence of others. The African loves to pretend (as I have said, he is no fool and does not deceive himself—much) that his present backwardness is entirely due to the effects of the slave-trade, the “exploitation” of European firms, and the criminal neglect of the governments. These are good debating points, with the merit of being in some part true, but they do not tell the whole story. For over a century the British Government (and others) have fought against the slave-trade, and slavery, which was, moreover, an established African institution before we admittedly took it up and “improved” on it.* As to “exploitation,” while commercial firms look to their profits rather than to philanthropy, they have brought much wealth to Africa by trade; and is it “exploitation” which prevents the African from competing successfully with the Syrian traders who come to the country poor and go away rich? And as to the faults of governments, are Liberia, or Haiti, or Abyssinia, models for European governments to follow in their colonies? Look at the statistics of trade in all these countries, and compare, on a road map of West Africa, the road systems of Liberia and the Gold Coast.

Believing that the African should be given every opportunity to fit himself for performing responsible duties in government service and otherwise, I arranged when I was Governor of the Gold Coast, for many scholarships for this purpose alone. When the African has fitted himself by a good education for a senior position he should be appointed to such a position, *provided* that he also has the strength of character to stand firmly against the temptations which assault all who hold positions of trust. I have never been discouraged by the failure of men whom I had thought fit for such positions, but I have been greatly discouraged, on many occasions, by the failure of public opinion to deplore and condemn the conduct of these individuals.

I believe that the African should be given every chance to progress politically, and that he should receive his political education through

* See second footnote at p. 34.

the control of local government, whether in the form of a municipality or a Native Administration. In British Honduras I gave to the people of Belize, for the first time, the right to elect a majority of the members of their Town Board. In the Gold Coast I arranged (unasked) for the Town Councils of the larger towns to include a majority of elected members, and I tried to encourage the Native Administrations by grants from government funds based on the amount they themselves collected in taxes from their people and spent on useful development. I mention these facts as indications of my general attitude to political advance in the colonies. But I do *not* believe that any West African or West Indian colony that I have served in is yet fit for self-government, or that a legislature based on the Westminster model, and elected by ballot, is necessarily the best thing for a colony. As a matter of fact those who clamour for self-government are very few,* as the majority (once again I repeat that the African is no fool) realise what this would mean. I am entirely in favour of colonial legislatures containing a majority of elected members (the experience has an educative effect) provided that the Governor retains sufficient "reserve" powers† to control the situation in the last resort.

Towards the end of my first term of service in Nigeria I had begun to take auction bridge seriously, and to play a lot in the evenings after tennis. I had played whist as a boy, and later had played bridge with one of my uncles who was the best card player I have known. At that time I was a regular reader of *The Daily Telegraph*, and when I was on leave in England in 1922 I wrote (as I realised afterwards, with some effrontery) to suggest that I should write a series of articles on Royal auction bridge for publication in the paper; somewhat to my surprise my offer was accepted, and during the next two years a weekly article by me (A.C.B.) appeared in

* *The African Morning Post* of the Gold Coast, in its issue of the 14th November, 1944, stated that "this country is certainly not ripe for self-government yet." This view was also expressed by the accredited representative of the Ewe people when addressing the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations at Lake Success on the 8th December, 1947, when he said: "We do not ask for self-government at the moment because we are incapable of governing ourselves just now, but in a few years' time we shall be capable of doing so." (The Ewe people inhabit the south-eastern part of the Gold Coast and the Trusteeship Territory of Togoland.)

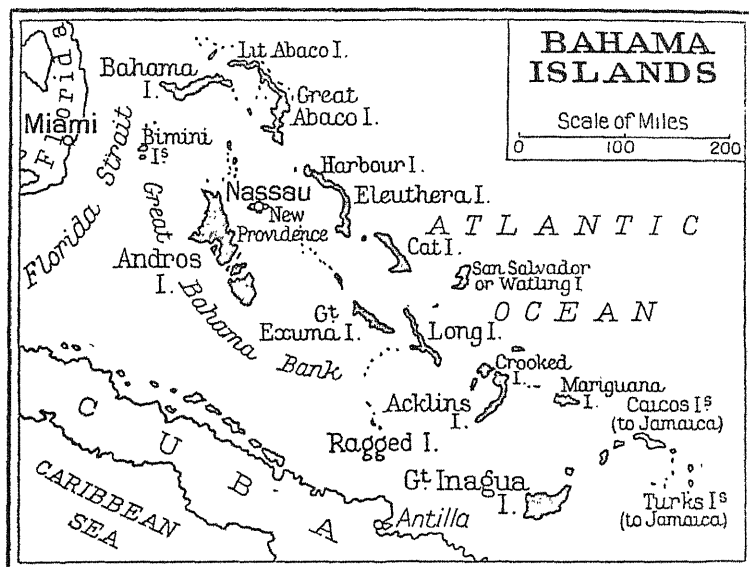
† For an explanation of "reserve" powers, see p. 277.

The Daily Telegraph. In 1924 a further suggestion of mine, that I should revise these articles for publication in book form, was accepted, and a small book, *Auction Bridge for Beginners*, was published by Messrs. Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd., the royalties being shared between *The Daily Telegraph* and me. Three editions of this book were published, the last under the title *Auction Bridge for Everybody*. Both my bridge articles, and later my book, were written actually for beginners, and assumed complete ignorance of the game, and indeed of card values generally, on the part of the reader; several letters that I received convinced me that these assumptions were appreciated. Too many of the books written at that period took it for granted that the reader had played the older forms of bridge or whist, and dealt only with the changes which were necessary in consequence of the new rules. But there were hundreds of new players who had never played cards before, to whom the most elementary matters were deep mysteries, and it was for their benefit that my book was written.

I take today less interest in the game, which to my mind has been spoilt by the multitude of conventions used, and the over-serious way in which so many people approach it. To a great extent it has ceased to be a game, and I prefer to take my recreation in a more lighthearted manner than is now possible at bridge. The trouble is that because I once wrote a book on bridge I am thought always to be keen on a game, and to be a good player, both of which assumptions are incorrect. (I used once to play with a very well-known writer on bridge and was surprised to find how badly he played his cards.) But my book has given me, in one way or another, a lot of fun. I was once attacked by a very fierce lady opponent for playing a false card, against, as she reminded me, the principles I had laid down in my book; she was not amused by my reply that the book had been written for beginners. On another occasion a lady, after making every conceivable mistake possible in several rubbers, sweetly informed me that she had learned all her bridge from my book; her husband, who was also her unfortunate partner, spoke bitterly: "My dear, I don't think he would like you to say that." I still prize, pasted inside the cover of my own copy of the book, a letter from a facetious friend, who wrote: "Since I've read your bridge book

I've lost £11 at bridge, but my wife, who read it less diligently, has only lost £2. H——, who has never seen the book, is £3 up." He added, as a last thrust, "My dog ate the first three chapters of your Nigerian Handbook in the office today."

Most books specially bound for use in tropical colonies have to be treated with insecticide, and have an appropriate label pasted inside the cover to indicate that this had been done. In the *Red Cross Bun*, which was published in Lagos during the war of 1914-18 to raise funds for the Red Cross, there appeared the following review: "*Handbook of Nigeria* (Burns). The chief merit of this little work is that it is *not* bound in a solution that renders it impervious to the ravages of insects."



CHAPTER IV

THE BAHAMAS

WHEN I was on leave in England at the beginning of 1924 I was offered and accepted the post of Colonial Secretary of the Bahamas, having first received an assurance, for which I had asked, that I should be able to live on my pay of £1,100 a year ; as it turned out, this information was misleading.

The Colonial Office asked me to proceed to my new post as quickly as possible, as the Governor had reported that he was ill and wanted to take leave as soon as he could be relieved. At some inconvenience, therefore, I left England within a few days by steamer for Halifax, where I was to catch another ship for the Bahamas. Unfortunately, the day I arrived in Halifax saw the beginning of a blizzard, which raged for several days and held up trains and ships alike. Inside the hotel at which I stayed the atmosphere was oppressive, as the rooms were over-heated ; outside the hotel it was bitterly cold, and there was little to do. I saw the Nova Scotia House of Assembly in session, the Speaker wearing a silk hat in place of the wig worn by Speakers in other places. I also saw some excellent ice-hockey. But I was very glad when the steamer, the *Canadian Forester*, was able to sail, in spite of the names of some of her officers ; the captain was named Coffin, the doctor Greaves, and I believe, although I never met him, that the name of the chief engineer was De'ath.* We spent a day at Bermuda, and I called on the Governor, General Sir John Asser. At that time no motor vehicles were allowed in the colony, and I drove in a horse cab to Government House and about the town ; both horse and cab (and driver) were suffering from old age.

War conditions, and especially the establishment of an American base in the colony in 1941, made it necessary for the law against motor vehicles to be relaxed. Before this one Governor had tried to

* In British Honduras there was a Doctor Killam, whose name did not frighten away patients. The best-advertised firm of undertakers in Cape Town are Messrs. Human and Pitt.

persuade the Bermuda legislature to amend the law so as to permit him to use a motor car, but the House of Assembly was adamant ; an alternative offer to provide him with a coach was unacceptable to the Governor, who soon afterwards left the colony. Another change brought about by war conditions in Bermuda was the appointment of civil Governors instead of the traditional military Governors ; the first two civilians appointed were peers. My short visit to Bermuda, on the way to the Bahamas, was of some interest, as the original British settlers in the latter colony came from Bermuda, and the two constitutions are much alike.

The Bahamas consist of about 20 inhabited islands, over 600 other small islands and cayes,* and nearly 2,000 rocks. The total land area of the colony is equal to about half the size of Wales, but the distance from the most northerly island of the group to the most southerly is about 500 miles. The islands are mostly long, narrow, and low-lying, with no mountains and very few hills ; there are pine forests on three of the northern islands, Abaco, Andros and Grand Bahama. The scenery cannot compare for grandeur with that of the mountainous West Indian islands, but the dazzling whiteness of the sandy beaches, contrasted with the deep blue of the sea, is very beautiful. Many of the islands, including New Providence on which the capital, Nassau, stands, lie outside of the tropics. For this reason the winter climate is delightful although in the summer it is very warm. The Gulf Stream, which flows between the Bahamas and Florida, saves the islands from excessive cold and frosts.

San Salvador, or Watling's Island, one of the eastern islands of the group, is now generally believed to be identical with Guanahani, the first land to be sighted by Columbus in the New World in 1492. At that time the islands were inhabited by a peaceful race of Indians, known as Lucayans, but these unfortunate people were deported by the Spaniards to Haiti to work, and die, there in the mines ; there is now no trace of them. In 1629 the Bahamas were included in a royal grant and British settlers began to arrive from Bermuda. In 1647 a further grant was made to a "Company of Eleutherian† Adventurers," and a third grant was made in 1670, vesting the islands in six

* Or cays ; pronounced "keys."

† One of the principal islands is called Eleuthera.

Lords Proprietors, who appointed a governor and established a form of government which included an elected parliament.* Raids by the Spaniards, and the activities of the pirates who made the island their headquarters, interfered with the progress of the infant colony, and the Governors exercised little real authority. One of the proprietary Governors was carried off, in 1680, by the Spaniards to Cuba, where he is said to have been "roasted on a spit," while another, more fortunate, was deported by the inhabitants in 1701 after having had his head broken with the butt end of a pistol with which the Speaker of the House of Assembly had previously tried to shoot him.†

In 1717 the Lords Proprietors surrendered their rights to the King, who appointed Captain Woodes Rogers as the first of the royal Governors who have since governed the colony; as a matter of fact he had the title of Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief, the title still borne by the King's Representative in Jamaica. Rogers seems to have been the right man for dealing with the pirates. He had himself commanded a privateer, and on one of his cruises had rescued Alexander Selkirk, the prototype of Robinson Crusoe, from the island of Juan Fernandez. On arrival in the Bahamas he was received by a guard of honour of armed pirates. He called upon all the pirates to surrender themselves and to give an undertaking to respect the laws; most of them, nearly a thousand in all, did so—and he hanged the rest. The colony's motto, *expulsis piratis commercia restituta*, which was adopted in 1728, has been transposed by those who are critical of the rapacity of the merchants to read in English: "Commerce having been expelled, piracy has been revived."

The geographical position of the Bahama islands, close to the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico and athwart the main route for sailing vessels from the West Indies to Europe, had made these islands ideal as a headquarters for pirates. The same reasons made them very suitable for the lucrative business of wrecking, which flourished for some time after the pirates had been eliminated, and was "controlled" by a system of licences. In 1858 there were 302 wrecking vessels and

* The present legislature dates from 1729; see p. 266.

† See *A History of the Bahamas House of Assembly*, by Harcourt Malcolm, p. 13.

2,679 wreckers licensed by the Bahamas government.* A moving light on the shore of some low-lying caye would lure a vessel to destruction, and her cargo would become the property of the wreckers; what happened to the crew of the vessel was quite immaterial. No fewer than 84 vessels, with cargoes valued at over half a million sterling, were wrecked in the Bahamas in the 22 months ending in June, 1860.† Finally, the British Board of Trade erected lighthouses at various points among the islands and put a stop to the wrecking business. One of the Out Islands‡ Commissioners told me, with scarcely concealed regret, of the good old days when wrecking was a profitable business, and of the value of the loot which his father had once acquired from a wrecked ship.

With the increase of population and legitimate trade which followed the introduction of settled government, the islands began to prosper. New Providence was captured by an American revolutionary fleet in 1776 but soon abandoned, and again in 1781 by the Spaniards; a British force recaptured it in 1783. After the American declaration of independence a number of loyalists, with their slaves, moved to the Bahamas and received grants of land; many of the present white inhabitants of the colony are descended from these loyalists. The later history of the Bahamas was much affected by two other events on the adjacent continent of America. The first was the civil war of 1861-65, during which Nassau became the base of the numerous ships which ran the blockade and carried cargo to and from the ports of the Confederate States; both government and people amassed much wealth through this lucrative trade. Again, after the prohibition amendment to the constitution of the United States in 1920, the Bahamas became one of the principal bases for the "rum-runners," and again people and government waxed rich on the proceeds of the business. But the most persistent source of income from the United States, and to a lesser degree from Canada, was the tourist trade, which will probably continue so long as the Bahamas winter climate remains unchanged.

* See *Silent Sentinels*, by Commander R. Langton Jones, R.N., p. 212.

† *Ibid.*, p. 226.

‡ The islands other than the headquarters island of New Providence are known as the Out Islands.

A few days after leaving Bermuda I arrived at Nassau, and the Governor very kindly asked me to stay at Government House until I could get a house for myself. This was not a very easy matter as houses were in great demand owing to the number of American tourists in the island, but I was fortunate in getting one fairly quickly ; a house is now provided for the Colonial Secretary of the Bahamas. The Governor and Lady Cordeaux were a very charming and hospitable couple, who entertained extensively and were justifiably popular with the American visitors. Having been told in the Colonial Office that Sir Harry Cordeaux had been very ill, I was surprised to find him in robust health ; he explained to me that he *had* been ill, and had asked that the post of Colonial Secretary should be quickly filled as he would like to go on leave, but this had been months earlier and he had forgotten all about it before I was appointed. The night of my arrival in the colony was celebrated by a serious fire* in a building alongside the Secretariat, but even if the Secretariat building had been destroyed all the files would have been preserved as my zealous staff had moved them to a place of safety. How pleasant it would have been to have started work in an office unencumbered by any "previous papers" !

The Bahamas Secretariat was a small one, but the staff was most efficient and got through a great deal of work. Some of the other departments were not so good, and a great deal of time was wasted on unnecessary labour, while more important matters were left unattended to. The financial arrangements in particular were archaic. The Treasurer signed every receipt for money paid into the Treasury, and I had some difficulty in persuading him to allow the cashier to sign these receipts "for the Treasurer." Again, the Treasurer was required by law to cancel by his own initials the stamps affixed to payment vouchers. I shall refer later to the system of Public Boards which obtained in the colony ; the Legislature voted annually to each Board the money necessary for the work they were to carry out during the next twelve months, and the practice had grown up of paying over the whole amount at the beginning of the financial year. This meant that considerable sums

* I have never been in a place where there were so many fires as in Nassau ; it was very generally believed that many of them were not accidental.

were paid to the Boards in April and kept by them on current account in the bank, while the Government account was brought very low indeed. On one occasion the Government was actually paying interest on an overdraft while the current accounts of the Public Boards were in a most healthy condition. I was able to put a stop to this waste of public money by arranging for the Boards to draw funds from the Treasury as they needed them, while the Government was able to place on deposit a considerable sum which was formerly left in the twenty-eight separate current accounts over which this money had formerly been distributed. Various other reforms in accounting methods and in the system of audit were introduced, and for the first time I was able to present complete draft estimates of revenue and expenditure for the coming financial year to the Governor and the Legislature ; in the past, incredible as it may seem, the "estimates" were prepared *after* the passing of the Appropriation Act.*

In Chapter XI I refer to the Bahamas constitution, to the tight hold which the House of Assembly keeps on the public purse, and to the attempts which it makes to control in various ways the functions of the executive. The most effective control is kept through the Public Boards, appointments to which, although made by the Governor, must by law include a minimum number of members of the House of Assembly. The Public Board of Works, for example, controls all that expenditure which in other colonies is handled by the Public Works Department under the direction of the Governor. The Director of Public Works in the Bahamas is, in fact, subordinate to the Chairman of the Board, and all contracts are approved at Board meetings. The Development Board also spends large sums, at its own discretion, on advertising designed to attract tourists to the colony. It is obvious that the chairmanship, and even the membership, of such Boards provides openings for ambitious men and gives them considerable powers.

The practice was for each Board to prepare its own estimates of proposed expenditure for the coming year, and for these estimates, together with those for expenditure to be incurred by Government

* In the Bahamas all statutes are called Acts. In "Crown Colonies" they are usually referred to as Ordinances.

departments not under the control of Boards (and not provided by law), to be sent to the House of Assembly for consideration. These estimates were considered by a committee of the House which later submitted the Appropriation Act, in which provision for works recommended by the Governor or Boards may or may not have been included. In this Act there was, of course, no reference to money which would be expended under the authority of other laws, such as, for instance, the Civil List Act or the Police Act, which authorised the Governor-in-Council to spend such money as might be necessary for the maintenance and upkeep of the Police Force. As expenditure on the Police was very considerable, and could be varied at the discretion of the Executive, the budget of the colony was an unknown quantity when the House of Assembly was discussing the Appropriation Act. Nor did the Appropriation Act even cover all the expenditure voted by the House in a single session. There was every year an Out Islands Improvements Act, and occasionally other Acts authorising expenditure. My efforts in producing a complete estimate of anticipated expenditure were publicly praised, but these estimates were regarded with suspicion as a dangerous innovation and a subtle attempt to whittle away the financial control of the House of Assembly. In point of fact they would have given the House greater control, but the members preferred the shadow to the substance. They preferred to prepare the Appropriation Act themselves, even *in vacuo*, to passing one which was tainted by official interference, however well meant.

I referred above to the Governor-in-Council, the Council in this case being the Executive Council. In most colonies certain powers are given by various laws to the Governor, or to the Governor-in-Council, to take executive action or to pass subsidiary legislation such as regulations, and, especially in those colonies where there are unofficial members of Executive Council, the legislature generally prefers to give such powers to the Governor-in-Council. In the Bahamas the House of Assembly almost invariably refused to pass laws giving powers to the Governor alone, believing that he could only be trusted to exercise power if he were controlled by the members of the Executive Council. In most colonies the term Governor-in-Council means the Governor acting after taking the

advice, but not necessarily accepting the advice, of the Executive Council : in the Bahamas the same phrase is defined by law to mean the Governor acting with the advice *and consent* of the Executive Council. As there is generally an unofficial majority in the Bahamas Executive Council, and as most of these unofficials are members of the House of Assembly, the legislature also, to some extent, controls the executive. The members of the Executive Council who are also members of the House of Assembly represent the Government in that House,* but I have known them to oppose Government measures there.

One subject in which I was greatly interested was the welfare of the people of the Out Islands. These islands were divided into some 18 districts, each under the control of a Commissioner. They were also represented in the House of Assembly, but almost in every case their representatives lived in New Providence and seldom visited their constituencies. (I have visited every inhabited island in the group.) There was no attempt made to develop these islands in a comprehensive way, and their representatives were satisfied if small sums were provided each year for the different islands, under the Out Islands Improvements Act, to pay for the digging of a well here, or the building of a landing stage there, or the clearing of a few miles of bridle-path which would be described as a road. The people grew tomatoes for the American market, or sisal, or foodstuffs for themselves, on small farms consisting often of little more than coral rock ; and they caught fish to vary their diet. The children went to schools of sorts, when these were within reach ; in some cases the children had themselves to sail a boat across from one island to another to get to school. There were practically no motor roads in the Out Islands. I suggested that a plan should be drawn up for the general development of the islands, and urged that roads should be given priority. Money, but not enough money, was provided for a main trunk road in Eleuthera, but after that the policy was abandoned, and there was a reversion to the bad habit of making small annual doles to each island to keep the people quiet.

In view of the conditions under which the Out Islanders lived, and the lack of any coherent policy for the improvement of those

* See p. 267.

conditions, it is not surprising that the people flocked to Nassau, where work was more easy to obtain, and where the American tourist was available as a steady source of income. So in Nassau there assembled a large number of loafers, who would have done honest work had they had the chance, to make money as they could during the tourist season each winter, and to hang about the streets or liquor shops during the summer, gradually deteriorating.

A large number of men from Nassau and the Out Islands were engaged from time to time on the sponging industry.* Small schooners, each towing several dinghys, would sail from Nassau to the sponge banks off the west coast of Andros island, generally known as "The Mud." There they would spend weeks at a time, members of the crews going out in the dinghys in pairs, one paddling or poling the dinghy and the other looking through a water-glass† at the sea-bottom until he sees a sponge, which he then proceeds to hook up with a long pole with curved prongs at the end. The sponges when caught look like black plum puddings. They are taken to some small cayc or deserted part of the shore of the main island, and there left to die and pollute the air for a considerable distance to leeward. They are then washed in sea water until most of the tissue is removed and nothing is left but the skeleton which we use in our baths. The scene on The Mud in the middle of the sponging season is most interesting. Scores of schooners lie at anchor or are under sail for another berth, while the sea seems to be covered with the dinghys of the men hooking up the sponges. On Sundays the schooners move closer together and a visiting clergyman or "local preacher" will conduct a service, all hands joining in the singing of the hymns.

It is a great pity that the sponging industry should be afflicted (as it was in my time and may be still) with the dreadful "advance" system.‡ The crew of a sponging schooner are given an advance by a merchant before they start for the sponging grounds, theoretic-

* That is, the fishing for "wild" sponges. There are also a few sponge "farms" where sponges are cultivated, as is also the case in British Honduras; for a description of this see p. 146.

† Generally a wooden bucket with a glass bottom. When held so that the glass is below the surface of the sea the surface shimmer is avoided and in shallow water the sea-bottom can be clearly seen.

‡ Which also afflicts the mahogany industry in British Honduras; see p. 127.

cally for the purchase of the necessary stores and to provide money for the men to leave with their families. In practice, very little is left with the families, and the women find it extremely difficult to carry on while the men are away. Most of the advance money is spent in the liquor shops and at the end of the sponging season the men have little to show as a result of their work.

It was with a view to helping these women that I got the owner of a large department store in the United States (a regular visitor to Nassau in the winter season) to take some interest in the fibre bags made in the colony. Excellent bags, of good design and bright colouring, are made by the women and sold to tourists who use them to carry their bathing suits or their shopping, but only a few are sold and many more could be made if there were a market for them. This gentleman offered to take large quantities for sale in his store if he could get them at a wholesale price, say 80 cents instead of the dollar at which they were sold to the tourists. Thinking that this would be of great benefit to the makers I called a meeting of the women and put the suggestion to them. They flatly refused to sell the bags at less than the retail price of a dollar which they were accustomed to receive from the tourists for single bags. When I pointed out that they would make more money as they would be selling more, they replied that this involved more work, and that, so far from receiving less than the dollar they received for single bags they should receive more per bag in recompense for the additional labour. This attitude was not due to any faulty explanation by me, as I had a man who had lived in the Bahamas all his life to explain the proposal. It is in keeping with the attitude of the West Indian labourer to which I have already referred,* and, while it is true that many of these people are existing just above the starvation level, in some cases at least they have only themselves to blame.

An important export from the Bahamas to the North American market is that of fresh tomatoes, which command a high price during the winter. The tomatoes are grown in "fields" which would be the despair of the English farmer. The ground is nearly all coral rock, but in the small holes worn by rain and weather in this rock, and assisted by explosives, there is rich soil in which tomato plants

* See p. 24.

flourish ; each hole is, in effect, a separate flower-pot in which a separate plant is growing. Dynamite is used to blast the rock where the holes are insufficient, and is classed as an agricultural implement in the colony. There is a story of a new Governor who was awakened early one morning, soon after his arrival in the colony, by a series of loud explosions not far from his bedroom ; believing that revolution was imminent he summoned his butler to enquire, and was reassured when he heard that the explosions had been caused by the gardener who was preparing a new flower-bed.

Other exports are sisal-hemp ; tortoise shell, obtained from a marine turtle ; salt, obtained from salt-pans in some of the Out Islands ; and cascarilla bark, obtained from a kind of wild croton, and used for perfuming incense and tobacco. The conch yields a pink pearl, while the "lip" of the shell used to be exported to Italy for the making of cameos. The flesh of this shell-fish is a popular article of diet among the local inhabitants, and for this reason the Bahamians are known as "conchs."* Some of the tourists who visit the islands also profess to enjoy a meal of conchs, but I am afraid that most of them are trying to be polite ; for my part, I should have to be very hungry before I could eat it. The best of the local dishes was undoubtedly turtle. Every Saturday night there was a turtle supper at the Nassau City Club, with one or two turtles cooked and then served in their shells with a pastry covering. The President of the Club at one end of a long table, and the Secretary at the other, placed a helping on each plate with a solemnity reminiscent of a religious rite ; the guests of honour would later receive on their plates pieces of the especially succulent calipee, the gelatinous substance found near the lower shell. I remember with great pleasure (both gastronomic and otherwise) many pleasant Saturday evenings at the Club.

All the industries, sponge fishing, tomato growing, and others of less importance, were as nothing in the minds of the Bahamians as compared with the tourist traffic. All the energies of legislature and people alike were bent on the important business of relieving the tourist of his money, and I am bound to say that the tourist co-

* A Bahamian character is referred to as "a stout conch" in *Tom Cringle's Log* (1825).

operated fully in this matter. Hotels were built at government expense, steamships were subsidised to run a good and regular service during the tourist season (and a much inferior service at other times), and money was spent freely in advertising the attractions of this wonderful holiday resort. The merchants of Bay Street, who controlled the House of Assembly, saw to it that everything should be done to attract the visitors who would spend money in their shops; the coloured people, who got good wages from the tourists, were equally enthusiastic. The tourists themselves revelled in the winter sunshine, the perfect sea-bathing, the fishing, and, especially during the reign of prohibition, in the unlimited amount of liquor they could obtain. They enjoyed riding in the quaint horse cabs which still survived; they thought the coloured people "cute"; and they went at night to see the "Holy Rollers" at their prayer meetings, rolling more enthusiastically at the thought of the collection they would take up from the rich visitors. Coloured orchestras played banjos and ukuleles in the moonlight, and sang to entranced audiences songs full of local allusions. There was dancing every night in the hotels, and at all times there were highballs and cocktails, followed by more highballs. American and Canadian visitors spent their money liberally, and the few British tourists with greater care. It was a glorious playground, but a very expensive place. The tourists poured money into the colony, but the people, both white and coloured, gave a great deal of their character in exchange for it.

While many of the tourists who visited the Bahamas were noisy and aggressive, there were a great number of delightful people among them, and I made several friends among Americans and Canadians.

Some of the American and Canadian* visitors came to Nassau

* One of the interesting Canadian visitors was Stephen Leacock, who often came to our house. He wished to give to my wife and me two of his books and asked us which we would like. We suggested that he should give us the two he thought his best, and he sent, suitably inscribed, *My Discovery of England* and *Nonsense Novels*.

every winter and built themselves beautiful houses. There was an American club, the "Porcupine," on Hog Island, which lies just opposite Nassau, and has the best bathing beaches ; every day the ferry boats would cross the narrow strip of water between New Providence and Hog Island with hundreds of enthusiastic bathers. Each winter Nassau harbour was crowded with yachts, and small launches were available for hire by ardent fishermen or sightseers. Glass-bottomed boats would carry tourists out to the reef, where they could see through the glass innumerable coloured fish swimming among the sea-fans and coral formations below. Through the kindness of Mr. J. E. Williamson, whose under-water motion pictures are well known, I was able to see the reef and sea-bottom through the glass window at the foot of his submersible tube. The tube, which expands like a concertina to allow for the motion of the sea, is suspended from a special craft, and is descended by a ladder to the chamber which rests on the bed of the sea ; the chamber is big enough to hold two persons sitting side by side, and a cine-camera stands before the glass window in front. The clearness of the sea water allows one to appreciate the beauty of the coral formations and the brilliant colours of the fish. Many good pictures have been taken in the Bahamas ; I saw one being "shot" which was interrupted by swarms of mosquitoes which bit unmercifully the beautiful, but scantily-clothed, lady star.

Bootlegging was at its zenith while I was in the Bahamas and brought much money into the colony. Not only did the tourist come to Nassau to drink good whisky in safety, but the whisky merchants did a roaring export trade. Large numbers of workers were employed in handling the whisky, in opening up the cases of twelve bottles and repacking the contents in "hams" of six bottles each, covered with sacking for more easy stowage and carriage. Every local vessel made money running the cargoes of liquor into Florida, or, with greater safety, to one or other of the numerous cays, where the real bootlegger waited to take delivery. Even the Government got a direct share of the booty ; a small import duty was charged on every case of liquor imported, and, as liquor could not be bonded, all that was imported for subsequent re-export to America paid this duty. The bootlegging business, in itself,

involved no breach of the Bahamas laws*; the whisky was duty-paid and ships could clear, under the local law, for any port or even for "the High Seas," and it was nobody's business to what destination they actually carried their cargoes. The trade statistics showed that enormous quantities of liquor were imported, and as none was shown as exported the inference was that every man, woman, and child in the colony consumed annually hundreds of gallons. The American coastguard officials were almost helpless to stop smuggling from such a convenient base as the Bahamas, especially as American public opinion was almost entirely on the side of the bootleggers and many of the officials themselves were in the racket. In 1926 I attended a conference at the Foreign Office in London with United States officials (under the chairmanship of the present Lord Vansittart) who urged that the Bahamas government should co-operate with them in suppressing the business; they suggested, not unreasonably, that the Bahamas government in fact was conniving with the bootleggers who were breaking the laws of the United States. It was pointed out that the Bahamas law was not being infringed, and that the only effective action which could be taken would be an amendment of the law, and the provision of a coastguard vessel to enforce it; there was, however, no chance that the Bahamas House of Assembly would pass such an amendment or vote the money necessary for a coastguard vessel. (The House of Assembly did, in fact, the following year, refuse to vote funds to provide a coastguard vessel, and on several other occasions gave evidence of its sympathy with the liquor traffic which was enriching the islands). In the end nothing much was done, but American coastguard cutters came into Bahamas territorial waters in search of the bootleggers, to the great indignation of the Bahamians, and, more especially, of the American

* But sometimes Bahamas laws *were* broken. On one occasion the Government received information that a cargo of whisky which had not passed through the Customs was being transferred from one vessel to another within the territorial waters of the colony. An armed launch was sent off which captured the vessels, and two armed policemen were put on board one of them. During the night the crew of this steamer slipped her cable, overpowered the policemen (one of whom was thrown overboard but picked up by the launch), and steamed away, the armed launch being unable to catch her. The second policeman, who was kept a prisoner for some time, was finally released in New York after having been warned not to say anything against his captors, who had, in the meantime, landed their cargo of liquor in New Jersey. When this policeman returned to the Bahamas he was, not unnaturally, reluctant to return to the United States to give evidence in the case.

bootleggers who claimed protection from the British government as long as they were in British waters ! One British bootlegger, who protested to me against this violation of Bahamian waters, repudiated with indignation any suggestion that he was engaged in a discreditable business ; he argued that his motives were entirely patriotic, and that through his efforts and the enterprise of Scottish distillers the money sent to America in respect of our war debts was being returned to the United Kingdom. The American coastguards were most unpopular. On one occasion, following a hurricane, a coastguard cutter was sent to one of the islands with doctors and medical stores, in spite of my assurance to the American authorities that this generous help was not required ; the people of the island, not realising that this was an errand of mercy, and that the men disembarking from the cutter were not coastguard officials, welcomed them with a volley of stones !

When in course of time the increasing efficiency of the American coastguards made the smuggling of liquor more difficult and dangerous, some of the bootleggers took up even more questionable activities. These included the smuggling into the United States of various kinds of "dope," and the clandestine landing on the shores of Florida of Chinese and other foreign immigrants from Cuba, who were prevented by the American immigrations laws from entering the country legally. Many of these unfortunate people, who were required to pay for their passages before they started, never saw Florida. Some were thrown overboard and left to drown by the scoundrels who had taken their money if there was any danger of the vessel in which they were travelling being stopped and searched by coastguard cutters. Others were marooned on small islands from which they might or might not be rescued before they starved to death ; for example, a party of 26 Greeks were left on Caye Sal in 1926, and only survived because they received food from the keeper of the lighthouse on this small islet.

A far greater danger to the bootleggers (and others) than the coastguards were the Hi-jackers, who were simply pirates. These gentry, in fast launches, would suddenly attack the (comparatively) honest bootlegger and relieve him of the money he had just received from the sale of liquor, or of the liquor itself. The Hi-jackers used

rifles and revolvers, and even machine guns, and the bootleggers were forced to arm themselves and their vessels in self-defence. Both parties were also prepared to return the fire of coastguard cutters. One of the Bahama islands was actually raided by Hi-jackers, and there were frequent rumours of other impending raids. We got reliable information, on one occasion, that a notorious party of bandits from Florida proposed to raid the bank in Nassau itself, counting on their ability to surprise the staff and get away with the loot in a fast motor boat before police action could be effective. All necessary precautions were taken, including the mounting of a machine gun, manned by police, in a house opposite the bank. The bandits heard, after they had started, that we were expecting them, and turned back ; they were met by the sheriff and his men as they landed on the Florida coast, and all but one of them were shot dead. They would have had a better chance if they had come to Nassau, as our police were discouraged from firing first and asking questions afterwards.

It is a remarkable tribute to the reputation of British administration that the toughest of the bootleggers (and there were some remarkable scoundrels among them) never drew his revolver nor gave any trouble to the police in Nassau, although he would not have hesitated to shoot at sight on the high seas or in the United States. On one occasion, when I was listening patiently to two Americans who were seeking a concession for real estate development in New Providence, one of them suggested that I might accept some shares in the enterprise ; before I had time to reply the other interrupted with the remark that "you can't do that sort of thing in a British colony." I have often wondered whether this was genuine or a preconcerted and subtle form of flattery. As a matter of fact I have only once received a bribe and that I had to return. My clerk told me one morning that a case of whisky had been sent to me by an American liquor dealer in Nassau, and was then in the office ; thinking that my wife had ordered it and had it sent to the Secretariat for me to bring home in my car I took no notice at the time. Later that day I heard that the dealer in question was in trouble with the police, and discovered that the whisky was a present. I returned it with an indignant letter, and received a very repentant reply,

assuring me that the whisky was not intended in any way to influence me, that the writer knew I could not be influenced by such things, and that the whisky was nothing more than a token of his high regard for me ! I once heard an explanation of the difference between a good judge and a bad judge ; the good judge accepted a bribe and gave judgment for the one who bribed him, while the bad judge took the bribe but decided the other way. It has also been said that an honest judge is one who takes presents from both sides and gives an impartial decision.*

It was in the Bahamas that I realised, more than in any other colony in which I have served, the local hostility to the "imported" official, to which I have referred above.† In West Africa this hostility is based on colour ; the imported official is almost invariably white, and his presence implies that the African is as yet unfitted to fill responsible positions. In the West Indies generally, and particularly in the Bahamas, the colour question is of less importance (although it is important enough), and what is resented is the filling of a local post by a stranger which would otherwise be filled by one of the sons of the soil ; in the Bahamas this son of the soil would probably be white. For this reason the House of Assembly refuses to increase the salaries of the higher posts in the Civil Service to a level which would allow of good and experienced officers from other colonies being sent to fill them ; it is hoped that if the salaries are kept low enough no one from abroad would accept the appointments, which would then be filled by local men. The salary could, of course, be raised later for the benefit of the local official, if appointed, or (and this point is frequently made) if the "imported" official is found to be efficient. This policy is a thoroughly bad one, as it places the Civil Service at the mercy of the legislature and reduces to this extent the control of the executive over its officers. In a small community, where everyone knows everyone else, it is particularly dangerous, as an unscrupulous officer could easily intrigue with members of the legislature with a view to having his salary raised. My salary as Colonial Secretary was raised on the initiative of the House of Assembly, and although this was not due

* *Call the Next Witness*, by P. Woodruff, p. 71.

† See p. 20.

to any intrigue on my part the public probably believed that it was. (As a matter of fact I stood a very good chance at that time of a transfer to another colony on promotion, which I should have preferred to an increase of salary in the Bahamas ; I hesitated between the two alternatives for some time but was persuaded to return to the Bahamas.) In any case there was no reason to think I was more efficient and deserving of a higher salary as Colonial Secretary than my predecessors had been, or that my successors in the post would be, and the grant of a personal salary to me was a bad precedent, although I gratefully accepted the much-needed money.

The proposal to increase my salary was strongly opposed by one of the members of the House of Assembly, both in debate and in the columns of his newspaper, *The Tribune*. He used much the same arguments as I have referred to above, but he was over-ruled by his fellow members, all of whom voted for the increase ; as the Governor and the Secretary of State agreed that I should have this increase, perhaps he and I were wrong in our views, and I was right to accept the larger salary.

One of the effects of the policy of keeping down the salaries of the senior posts is that the Secretary of State has great difficulty in filling these posts in the Bahamas. To my knowledge, several good officers have refused appointments in that colony because of the small salaries offered and other conditions of service there (for instance, senior officers have to bear the cost of their passages to the Bahamas on appointment, contrary to the usual rule in the Colonial Service). The only colonial officials, therefore, who are likely to accept these appointments, are those with private means (very few in number), or young and inexperienced officers who are prepared to take a chance of future promotion, and may or may not prove a success. The alternative is to appoint a man who is not yet in the Colonial Service, and, knowing nothing of the better conditions existing in other colonies, accepts the offer of a post in the Bahamas ; as nothing much is known of him before appointment, and he has never been tried in a junior capacity, there can be no certainty that he will prove efficient. If in these circumstances one half of the officials "imported" into the Bahamas prove to be successful in their posts the colony is more lucky than it deserves. The bad importa-

tions (I have known some of them) are referred to as justification for the policy of the House of Assembly, but they are, of course, the result of this policy.

There is one point which I think needs emphasising. The general disparagement of "imported" officials as a class did not affect the friendliness, and indeed the kindness, of Bahamians to the individual officer. And it was not always realised, either by the Bahamians or by the officials themselves, that the "imported" official who was unpopular with the local people was almost invariably disliked by the other officials, for good and sufficient reason.

I referred above to *The Tribune*, the newspaper edited by one of the members of the House of Assembly. It was a well-run journal, much more alive and interesting to read than its staid and highly respectable rival, but inclined at times to go beyond the limits of fair criticism. It represented the coloured people of the colony, and its editor sometimes allowed racial prejudice to warp his judgment, which was otherwise good. I thought, for instance, that his earlier appreciation of my work* showed excellent judgment, but alas, this did not last, and towards the end of my service in the Bahamas my friends must have enjoyed the constant attacks made on me. These began in consequence of a protest I made against a quite unwarranted and offensive attack on the Governor, to which I was bound, in loyalty, to take exception, but they continued on my own merits—or demerits. When I was leaving the colony I was honoured with an editorial which said: "... *The Tribune* differed with him over many things ... in fact, we disagreed with him about almost everything. But ... as strongly and, sometimes, as bitterly as we may have differed from him, we liked and admired the man ... In wishing him success, we have no hesitation in saying that we shall miss having him to fight with."† I am glad to have this opportunity, after so many years, of returning the compliment, and of assuring the editor that I bore no ill-will towards him or his newspaper. I very often agreed with his views on local politics, and when I did not I always found him an interesting adversary. We are much older,

* See *The Tribune* of 29th October and 5th November, 1924.

† See *The Tribune* of 1st December, 1928.

and I hope a little wiser, than we were in the days when we were both members of the Bahamas House of Assembly.

The other newspaper in the Bahamas was *The Nassau Guardian*, edited by that remarkable and patriotic lady, Miss Mary Moseley. The *Guardian* was founded, in 1844, by Miss Moseley's grandfather, and has been conducted by members of the family for over a century with a public-spirited devotion to the interests of the colony. A legal decision of some importance resulted from a letter written to the *Guardian* in 1892. This letter criticised the Chief Justice of the colony, who had the editor, Mr. Alfred Moseley, brought before him and sentenced him to pay a fine and go to prison for contempt of court in publishing the letter, and a further fine, with imprisonment until this fine was paid, for refusing to divulge the name of the writer of the letter. A deputation of influential members of the community, both white and coloured, made representations to the Governor, who ordered the release of Mr. Moseley, in spite of the protests of the Chief Justice who disputed the Governor's right to take such action. The matter went to the Privy Council, at which the Chief Justice was represented by counsel; the Privy Council held that Mr. Moseley was not guilty of contempt of court by publishing the letter or by refusing to name the writer, and that the Governor had the power, in the exercise of the Royal Prerogative, to release him.*

I refer in a later chapter† to the constitution of the Bahamas, and to my membership of the House of Assembly. The Governor of the Bahamas had then the magnificent title of Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Bahama Islands, Vice-Admiral and Ordinary of the Same. When I administered the government in the absence of the Governor I had the same title with the word "Administrator" in place of Governor. Everyone knows what a Vice-Admiral is, and the Governor of every British possession is *ex officio* a Vice-Admiral (whether or not it is referred to in his formal title) in order that he should have the power of setting up prize courts in his territory,‡ but very few people know what an

* See Law Reports (House of Lords and Judicial Committee of the Privy Council), 1893, p. 138.

† See p. 267.

‡ Under the authority of the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act, 1890.

Ordinary is (used in this connection). To my surprise I found myself, when administering the government of the Bahamas, and "Ordinary of the Same," to be a judge of ecclesiastical causes ; to my lasting regret I never had the opportunity of exercising my functions in this respect, and as a Roman Catholic it would have been an amusing situation had I been called upon to do so. "Ordinary of the Same" has now been dropped from the title of the Governor of the Bahamas, which is perhaps a pity. But for all the grandiloquence of his title the Governor of the Bahamas was not (and still is not) in a strong position. He has responsibility without adequate power, while the elected House of Assembly has considerable powers without any kind of responsibility.

In 1926 I went to England on leave, and as one (the other was the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Mr. Harcourt Malcolm) of the two representatives of the Bahamas to the West Indian Conference, which was so ably presided over by the late Sir Edward Davson. I am not sure that the Conference achieved a great deal, as it was not followed up quickly enough by another, but the delegates were lavishly entertained in London and had a very interesting visit. We were received by the King at Buckingham Palace, and dinners were given for us by His Majesty's Government, the West India Committee, and many other public bodies and hospitable individuals ; we also enjoyed a tour round the docks of the Port of London Authority.

Sir Harry Cordeaux retired in 1926, and was succeeded by Sir Charles Orr, who assumed duty in 1927 ; I administered the Government during the long interregnum. (I did so four times during my stay in the Bahamas). In 1927 I was appointed a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George.

While most of the inhabitants of the Bahamas are of African descent, there is a larger proportion of whites than in any of the British West Indian islands (incidentally, the Bahamians dislike being called West Indians, although no amount of argument can disprove the geographical fact that the Bahamas are part of the West Indies). In two small islands, Little Guano Caye (Hope Town), near Abaco, and Spanish Wells, just north of Eleuthera, the population is entirely

white, and here inbreeding has had some unfortunate results. In the north of Andros there are traces of Indian blood, not that of the aboriginal Lucayans but of later settlers from Florida; here bows and arrows are used to shoot fish in the shallow waters.*

Andros is a large island, or rather a collection of islands separated by numerous channels or bights. The interior consists of vast lagoons and swamps, divided by ridges on which grow clumps of pine. The eastern coast is dotted with settlements, and there can still be seen the remains of Neville Chamberlain's unsuccessful attempt to establish a sisal plantation. Off the western shores lies "The Mud," the resort of sponging schooners. The interior of Andros is quite deserted and has scarcely been explored,† which accounts for the strange tales of mysterious inhabitants which the people firmly believe. More mysterious still are the "Chickchawnies," monsters which pull down the tops of four pine trees and knot them together to make their nests; I have never met anyone who has actually seen the Chickchawnies or one of their nests, but everyone in Andros seems to have heard of them from actual eye-witnesses whose reputation for veracity was said to be beyond doubt. The belief in spirits is widespread in Andros and other islands. At one settlement which was being ravaged by tuberculosis the medical authorities had found it impossible to persuade the people to sleep with their windows open. Filled with confidence in my powers of persuasion, I went myself to the settlement and pointed out to a gathering of the inhabitants the danger of sleeping in houses with every door and window closed. The people listened politely to what I had to say and then one of them remarked that it was impossible to leave their windows open because of the mosquitoes, which were indeed very troublesome in Andros. I then promised that the Government would supply them with wire gauze to cover their windows, if they, for their part, would undertake to keep the windows open; it was then that the truth came out,

* A similar practice seems to exist in British Guiana, judging from one of the stamps issued in that colony.

† I tried once to cross Andros in a flat-bottomed boat, starting from Fresh Creek, and actually reached a large freshwater lake in the middle of the island, but darkness and the shallowness of the waterways forced me to turn back. On this expedition I was bitten unmercifully by "doctor flies."

when it was courteously but firmly pointed out to me that wire gauze would not exclude "spirits," and that the people had no intention of running the risk of a visit by spirits at the dead of night.*

But if I saw no Chickchawnies or spirits in Andros, I saw there one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen, a huge flock of flamingoes rising into the air as my wife and I approached the rookery in the Government reserve. There must have been a thousand birds at least in that flock, a wonderful splash of pink against the sky. When the main flock rose, a few adult birds remained by the nests to guard the young, but as we approached closer even the nurses deserted their charges, young birds covered with white down, rather like ugly ducklings. The adult birds have long necks and long legs,† and the wings are edged with black. The nests are made of mud, raised about a foot from the ground to protect the eggs from damage in case the low-lying land on which they build should be flooded. The principal food of the flamingo is a small mollusc in a spiral shell, and the method of feeding is peculiar. The flamingo presses its head into the mud, taking mud, water and mollusc into its bill; it then squirts out, through channels in the side of the bill, the mud and water and retains the mollusc.

The iguana is hunted for food in the forests of Andros, and the turtle in all the waters of the colony, the green turtle for food and the hawksbill for the tortoiseshell of commerce. Fish of all kinds are plentiful and fishing is one of the regular occupations of the tourists. In Inagua island there are wild cattle and wild donkeys, the descendants of domestic animals that have escaped; I drove in a lorry along one of the "roads" of Inagua and saw a number of the wild donkeys, which approached quite close to satisfy their curiosity, and then, to show their contempt, kicked their heels in the air and galloped away.

The islands are naturally full of traditions about the pirates, and "Blackbeard's Castle" in New Providence is supposed to have been the watch-tower of the notorious Edward Teach, popularly known as Blackbeard, a picturesque scoundrel who was killed in a fight with a British warship in 1718. He is reputed to have gone into

* For other instances of superstition, see pp. 140, 179.

† See the beautiful stamp issued in the Bahamas illustrating flamingoes in flight.

battle with burning matches stuck in his beard, a dangerous practice,* and to have chewed wine-glasses in his more jovial moments.† Much buried treasure is supposed to have been found in the islands from time to time, and I have myself seen Spanish silver coins, embedded in coral, which were uncovered after a storm washed away much of the sand on the beach of one of the Out Islands; these coins were presumably buried there in a box.‡

Some of the names of the various places in the Bahamas are remarkable and full of interest. There is a cemetery in New Providence with the apt name of "See Me No More," and in the same island there is a point known as "Pull and be Damned," which probably recalls the unavailing efforts of a weary boat's crew. "Far for Nothing," "Labour in Vain," "Starve Creek," "Hungry Hall," and "Hard Bargain" sound depressing, but "Jolly Hall," is more encouraging. "Cooling Temper Bay" probably has an interesting story that will never now be known, and it is impossible to discover the origin of the name of "Don't-ye-may" caye. "Deadman's Caye" and "Deadman's Bay" are names one would expect to find in a place so long infested by pirates, and Rum Cay is also natural.§

The settlement of Rolleville, in Exuma, is inhabited by the descendants of the slaves of Lord Rolle, who presented all his lands in that island, at the time of emancipation, to his former slaves and their descendants. The people of this settlement are said to be

* This reminds me of an account I read in the Gold Coast newspaper, *The Spectator Daily*, in its issue of the 19th June, 1944, of how a Muslim, playing ludo with his friends, in the excitement of the game, bent over the board so low that his beard caught fire from the candle which illuminated the play, and was destroyed; W.G. found cricket a safer game.

† As Sir Richard Grenville was supposed to do.

‡ Most of the West Indian islands have traditions of buried treasure. *The Archives of British Honduras* reveal that in 1867 two Americans went to Turneffe, a group of cayes off the shores of British Honduras, and dug for treasure, the place where it was hidden having been disclosed to them by the last of the pirates concerned with it just before he died; they were not successful, but it is said that the treasure was actually found at Turneffe some twenty or thirty years later, and I have seen the large hole from which it is supposed to have been removed. Many other searches have been made in British Honduras for buried treasure, but none is known to have been successful.

§ There are some curious names also in British Honduras. I have stamps bearing the postmarks of "Baking Pot," "Duck Run," "Double Head Cabbage," and "Monkey River," while a ford across one of the rivers is known as "Pull-trousers." In the Gold Coast there are villages named "Coaltar" and "Cement."

disorderly ; they are certainly independent, but I found them extremely friendly and well-mannered.

When I first arrived in the Bahamas I was told that serious hurricanes very seldom visited the islands, but during the five years I was there I experienced several of these storms, which did much damage. While the larger and better-built houses seldom receive more than superficial damage, the houses of the labouring population are almost wholly destroyed in a severe hurricane, and small vessels also suffer severely. During one hurricane I saw small craft being swept out of Nassau harbour by the force of the wind and current, their moorings having broken away, while the people on shore could do nothing to help the crews who were never seen again. In one hurricane many churches in Nassau were badly damaged, to the quiet amusement of the liquor dealers who had recently been preached against, but a second hurricane the same year destroyed several liquor warehouses and restored the balance. The loss of life, except among crews of vessels lost, was never very severe, but the poorer section of the community suffered a great deal from exposure to the heavy rains that accompany hurricanes, and from the loss of their homes and crops.

Communications between headquarters and the Out Islands were generally interrupted by each storm, and it was difficult, owing to the heavy seas which lasted for some time after the wind had subsided, and to the loss of the small motor and sailing vessels which usually plied between the islands, to ascertain exactly what had happened and to carry the necessary relief to the islands most in need. It was in these circumstances, after the hurricane of September, 1926 (I was then administering the government), that I asked the Admiral commanding the North America and West Indies squadron to place a vessel at my disposal to enable me to visit the Out Islands and take much-needed medical comforts and supplies to the stricken people. His Majesty's Sloop *Valerian* was sent from Bermuda, and in her I went to all the islands that had suffered from the hurricane with food, medical supplies and money ; I was also able to authorise the Commissioners on the various islands to carry out any urgently needed work. At one island, Mayaguana, the heavy seas had swept right across the low-lying land and all the wells had been filled with

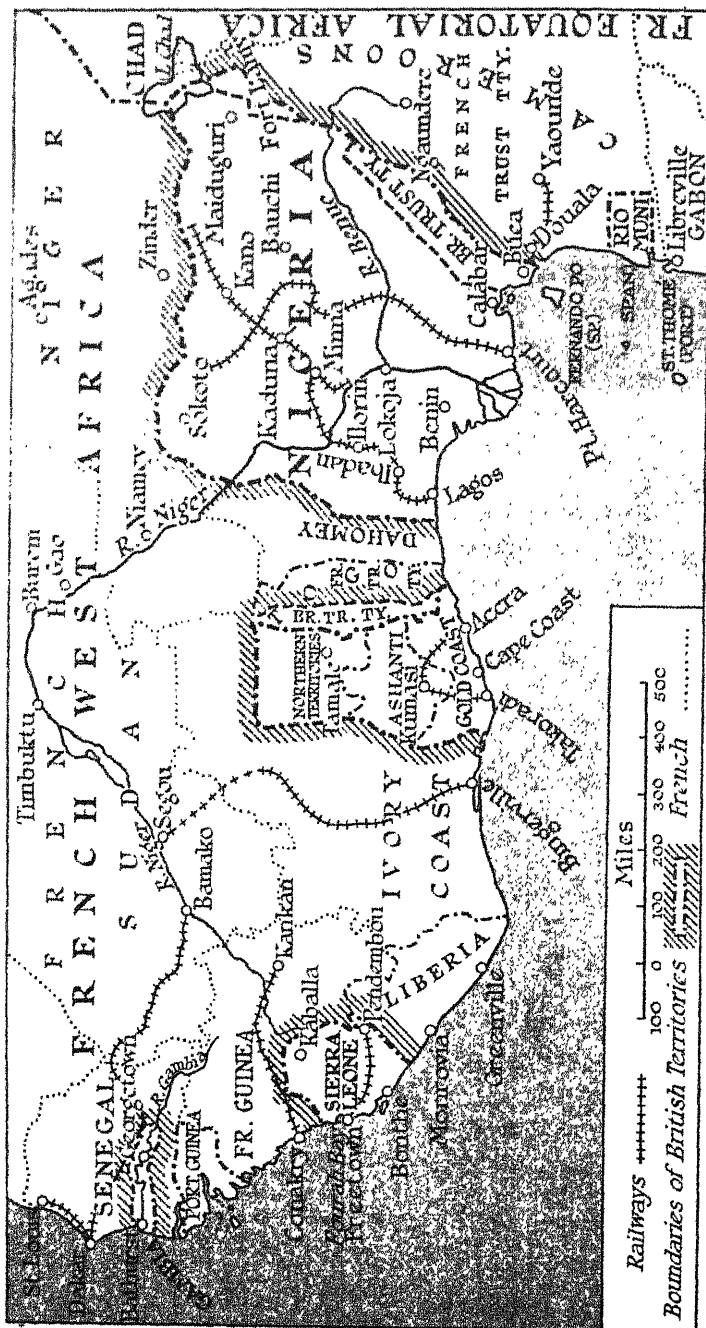
salt water, making them quite useless and causing great distress to the people ; as an emergency measure casks of water were landed from the *Valerian* and a wireless message was sent to another island for supplies of water to be sent to Mayaguana. In the meantime, as there was no Commissioner in the island, I myself started the people on the digging of new wells. When I returned to Nassau in the *Valerian* we received warning of the approach of another hurricane, and the Captain decided to leave at once for Bermuda in the hope of reaching harbour there before the storm could overtake him. Unfortunately, the ship was caught by the hurricane, which moved with extraordinary speed, some five miles from Bermuda, on the 22nd October, and the *Valerian* was sunk with heavy loss of life, only 19 survivors being rescued after having spent a terrible night on rafts.* I am glad to say that the Bahamas House of Assembly voted a generous contribution to the fund that was raised for the benefit of the relatives of those who were lost with the *Valerian*. At Bermuda, during this hurricane the wind blew with a force of 136 miles an hour.

After another hurricane, and while the sea was still fairly rough, I went in a motor launch from Nassau to Andros to see how the settlements on that island had fared. At that time I was not a very good sailor and the rolling of the small craft was too much for me. When my misery was at its height I was asked whether I would like anything to eat, but declined. Later, when I was feeling a little better, a fish was caught on the line we were towing astern, and I indicated that I should like some of this fish boiled ; I was told, however, that the fish was a baracuda, and might be poisonous, and the captain was therefore afraid to give me any, so I settled down in my bunk prepared to suffer hunger as well as sea-sickness. An hour or two later some of the boiled fish was brought to me, and it was explained that the ship's boy had been given some to eat and as he was still quite well it was thought safe for me to have some ! It is a curious thing that the baracuda in the West Indies is thought to be sometimes poisonous, and therefore seldom eaten if any other kind of fish is available, while in West Africa it is highly esteemed

* My wife and children were not very far away at the time, being passengers in a steamer bound for the Bahamas. They had a very rough passage.

as one of the best fish for the table. I have heard it said that the symptoms of baracuda-poisoning are similar to those of copper-poisoning and that if a silver spoon is placed in the water in which baracuda is being boiled it will become discoloured if the fish is poisonous.

The last hurricane I experienced in the Bahamas was in 1928, while I was once again administering the Government. It did much damage and I visited the Out Islands as soon as the weather had moderated sufficiently. Shortly afterwards the Governor returned from leave and I left for England, via New York and Canada. At Toronto I stayed with friends and later went with them to their summer residence at Orillia. I then visited Montreal and Quebec, and stayed with other friends on the Isle of Orleans. The voyage down the St. Lawrence River, en route to England, was one of the most interesting I have ever made.



CHAPTER V

NIGERIA AGAIN

DURING the five years that I was in the Bahamas I worked, when I could find the time, on a *History of Nigeria* for which I had been collecting notes over a long period. When the book was complete, in 1928, I tried without success to get various publishers interested in it ; none of them seemed to share my opinion of its chances, and all were confident that sales would not cover the cost of publication. Finally, while I was on leave in England at the end of the year, Messrs. George Allen and Unwin Ltd. decided to take the risk, and I was soon busy with the correction of proofs. Unfortunately, I had to leave England for Nigeria before all the proofs had been corrected and, owing to the rush at the last moment, I was unable to obtain from Lord Lugard the Foreword which he had promised to write. The book was published in March, 1929, and received some complimentary reviews. It has now gone to four editions and I get some satisfaction from the thought that I was right and the publishers were wrong about its chances of success.

It was during my leave from the Bahamas at the end of 1928 that I was offered and accepted the post of Deputy Chief Secretary of Nigeria, the colony to which I had hoped, all through my service in the Bahamas, to return, and in which I still continue to take the greatest interest. Very few of the European staff of the old Nigerian Secretariat still remained when I assumed duty in Lagos in February, 1929. I was privileged to act as Chief Secretary to the Government from the day I arrived, as the substantive holder of the office was administering the Government and, with brief intervals of duty in my own post and leave in England, I continued to act as Chief Secretary for most of the next five years. This post is probably, with the exception of some of the governorships, the most responsible and interesting in the Colonial Service. The country is large, the population at least three to four times as great as that of any other colony, and the problems of great variety. With the Governor in bad health the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the Chief

Secretary was very heavy ; at all times his work made demands which only the quick worker and one who was physically strong could cope with.

At first I was required, while acting as Chief Secretary, to live in the bungalow assigned to that office, but later I succeeded in occupying my own (Deputy Chief Secretary's) house continuously. This was delightfully situated at Ikoyi, on the banks of the Lagos Lagoon, and was most comfortable ; it was, in fact, the best house I have lived in in the colonies. We were the first occupants of this house and my wife succeeded in making the garden a thing of beauty. We planted many fruit trees, but, as has happened to so many colonial officials, we left Nigeria before any of them had borne ; it has been little consolation to hear from men who have since occupied the house that the fruit was plentiful and delicious.

Frequent changes of station, and in some cases changes of quarters within a single station, do not encourage officials to make gardens. Too often an official moves into a bungalow which stands in the midst of a wilderness, either because the bungalow itself is new or because the previous occupier was not interested in gardening ; often, also, a good garden on which much care and expense has been devoted, is allowed to become a wilderness by a subsequent occupant. In my view officials should not be required to make new gardens, or recondition old ones, at their own expense. They are not required to repair or paint their bungalows and the garden is just as much the property of Government as is the bungalow. A senior official with a good salary, and fairly certain that he will continue to live in the same house for some time, may be prepared to spend money on his garden ; the junior official, apart from the insecurity of his tenure, is unable to face the cost. In many cases, e.g., in Lagos, the sandy soil has to be improved by a large dressing of "black" earth, brought from a considerable distance and at great expense. I consider that the Government should provide the necessary funds to make a garden for each official bungalow, should set out the necessary hedges and plant fruit trees, and it would then be reasonable to ask each occupier to maintain the garden.*

* For two years I tried unsuccessfully to obtain, through the Colonial Office, a trained gardener from England who could put into effect in the Gold Coast the policy I advocate here and train African gardeners. He did not arrive until after I had left.

The chief attraction of Lagos is the opportunity for boating in the harbour and lagoon. There is a yacht club with many members, and the Saturday afternoon racing is always exciting. I was able to keep a dinghy near my house and sailed it frequently in the lagoon on the north side of Lagos island. This lagoon was generally crowded with canoes, some being poled or paddled, but the majority sailing with a favourable wind. In the morning the prevailing breeze from the north-east brought the canoes, laden with produce for the Lagos markets, from the numerous towns and villages that fringe the northern banks of the lagoon ; in the evening a south-west breeze took them home again, and I have counted more than a hundred canoes under sail on the lagoon at the same time. Occasionally a large raft of logs would be floated down the lagoon to the local saw-mill or for shipment abroad ; on the raft would be the straw huts of the men in charge, who lived on the raft for several days while it drifted slowly with the current or was poled along in still waters. At all times the lagoon was full of life and interest.

One of the most important incidents in Nigeria, soon after my return there, was that generally spoken of as the "women's riots," to which I refer in Chapter X. Less serious, although much longer drawn out, was the struggle between the Lieutenant-Governors of the Northern and Southern Provinces and the substantive Chief Secretary, into which I was dragged much against my will ; it was a struggle, accentuated by the personal antipathies of the combatants, which could quickly have been settled by a firm decision from the Governor. Closely connected with this struggle was another more far-reaching. This was the struggle of the technical departments to escape from the control of the Administrative Service, exercised by the Lieutenant-Governors through Residents and District Officers, more especially in the Northern Provinces. The general relationship which should exist between the different branches of the Government, including the Native Administrations, had been clearly laid down in a minute by Sir Hugh Clifford,* which was later endorsed by Sir Donald Cameron,† but the position had gradually deteriorated. I attended a lengthy meeting of those concerned at Government

* See *Nigeria Gazette* of 27th November, 1920.

† See *Nigeria Gazette* of 22nd December, 1932.

House, under the chairmanship of the Governor, but no decision was arrived at as a result of this meeting.

The principles involved, shorn of their personal implications, are very simple. The important point is that the Chief Commissioner (at that time styled Lieutenant-Governor) is the principal executive authority in the area for which he is responsible, and it is his business to overlook the entire machinery of government in that area, whether "political" or departmental. He is entitled to call the attention of the head of a technical department to any matters in which the affairs of that department need improvement or change because of their effect on the affairs of the area generally, and he may even, in an emergency, give direct orders to a departmental officer. Similarly, the Residents of Provinces (or Provincial Commissioners, as they are called in other colonies) exercise within their own more limited areas a general authority and responsibility for all government activities. Provided that heads of technical departments delegate a measure of responsibility to their junior officers in the Provinces and Districts, there is little difficulty in observing these principles, but the tendency to centralise all authority at headquarters and to ignore the Administrative Service when issuing orders to departmental subordinates is bound to lead to friction, as it did in Nigeria at the period to which I am referring. At the same time, it must be admitted that a little tact on the part of the Administrative Service, which was not then very conspicuous, would have got over many of the troubles.

Soon after I became Governor of the Gold Coast I issued a circular minute,* in which I referred to the responsibility of the Administrative Service in this matter, and I added: "It is not meant by this that the Administrative Service should interfere in technical departmental matters, or that instructions should be given to departmental officers in matters which do not affect the general political welfare of the area. But it is the duty of Administrative Officers to keep themselves fully informed of departmental activities, and to report to headquarters without delay if these activities are causing, or are likely to cause, any political or other difficulties. It is also the duty

* Dated 17th August, 1942. This was amplified in a later minute dated 21st March, 1945.

of Administrative Officers to report if the departmental services are inadequate in any area, or are being inefficiently carried out. I am aware that these duties may lead to friction between the Administrative Service and departments, but I rely on the good sense of Administrative Officers and Departmental Officers alike for the tactful and discreet handling of delicate situations.

Inter-departmental co-operation, and co-operation between the members of the Administrative Service and the local representatives of departments is essential. At headquarters a committee has been formed to secure the co-ordination of departmental activities, and I regard co-operation and co-ordination in the districts as no less important. Officers should remember that we are all members of the same team, each of us with different duties and responsibilities but each equally important to the success of the side as a whole. The closer the co-operation between all Civil Servants in a station the higher will be the efficiency of the Public Service in that area."

The importance of co-operation between all officials, and indeed between officials and non-officials, can hardly be exaggerated, and in my view the inability of an officer to work with others is a serious defect which impairs his usefulness, no matter how technically efficient he may be in his own line. Looking back to my service in Nigeria, and in other colonies, I can call to mind many a civil servant, loyal, intelligent, and hard-working, whose value to the colony was definitely impaired by a fault of manner, or a lack of tact, which made it impossible for him to deal with other departments, or the public, without constant friction. In a junior officer such a disability is serious ; in a senior officer it is disastrous.

During my previous service in Nigeria I had been much impressed by the need for a library in Lagos, but had failed to persuade the Governor that this was a matter deserving of Government support ; in default of something better a Book Club was started, following a meeting convened in my house, but the membership was limited and only a few books could be obtained each year. When I knew that I was to return to Nigeria I got in touch (through my eldest brother, Dr. C. Delisle Burns) with Dr. Keppel, the President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and was able to persuade him that a library in Lagos would be of great value ; after some negotia-

tion a sum of £1,650 was placed at my disposal for this purpose. Housed at first in two rooms in Moloney Street, and afterwards in the building once occupied by the Garden Club in Government House grounds, the Lagos Library was started in October, 1932. No assistance whatever was received from Government funds, and rent was paid to Government for the use of the buildings in which the books were kept. The books of the old Book Club were taken over, and the membership of the Library was open to all who were able to pay a subscription of 2s. 6d. a month; in the absence of Government support it was impossible to reduce the subscription, but in spite of this a certain number of Africans and a great many Europeans joined the Library. The Committee responsible for its management included the late Dr. Henry Carr, a prominent African who was himself the owner of a large collection of books. An African was employed as librarian, but most of the work of labelling and classifying the books, and later of cataloguing them, was done by volunteers, including some ladies who worked in the Library for long hours every day. The arrangement of the books and the catalogue would no doubt have shocked the professional librarian, but at least we could find the books we wanted, and in those days West Africa had not yet been invaded by the swarm of experts who later infested it, and spent much of their time criticising the work of those who had had, of necessity, to make bricks without much straw.

The selection of the books for the Library involved a lot of work, amply repaid by the joy of opening the cases and handling the numbers of volumes which arrived. To preserve them from the attacks of insects each book had to be treated with a special solution which, unfortunately, made the Library smell unpleasantly of disinfectant. One of the curses of the tropics lies in the rapidity with which books will deteriorate if not carefully watched and cared for. Not only do termites bore through covers and leaves but cockroaches and damp spoil the outward appearance of the volumes and make them unpleasant to handle. To a book-lover this is a tragedy. At one time I was a believer in the advantage of keeping books in closed cases in the tropics but I am now a convert to the open-shelf theory; books kept on open shelves need dusting more frequently but they are more easily watched and less liable to the effects of damp.

Another institution in Lagos of which I am proud to have been one of the founders is the Dining Club. It was composed of an equal number of Africans and Europeans, of officials and non-officials, and we met once a month at an hotel for dinner. Each month there was a different chairman, and there were no speeches. At first the evenings tended to be rather stiff, but later, as we got to know one another better, the stiffness wore off and the evenings became very pleasant.

As in most tropical countries, the food eaten in West Africa by both Europeans and Africans is generally highly spiced and peppery. This is probably necessary on account of the dullness of the food and bad cooking.* "Palm Oil Chop" and "Ground Nut Stew" are well-known local dishes. In each the basis is, as a rule, chicken cut up and stewed with a thick gravy of which the main components are palm-oil or groundnut-oil; rice is served with this and also chutney and numbers of "gadgets," which include grated coconut, pepper, and various pieces of fruit. Curry is also a popular dish, but I am informed by those who know that the West African curries compare very unfavourably with those of India. The best palm oil chop is that prepared in the river ports of Nigeria, where the cooks have the best ingredients and the longest traditions; but even there it is a food which should be eaten sparingly. The example of the "old coaster," who ate enormous quantities of palm oil chop on Sundays for luncheon, and then retired to bed to sleep it off until Monday morning, is not one to be followed. It was, however, in British Honduras that I met the man who is reputed to have said of the turkey that it was an unsatisfactory bird, being too much for one man and not enough for two.

Dr. Henry Carr, to whom I referred above in connection with the Lagos Library, was also a prominent member of the Lagos Dining Club. He was an African of great erudition and strong character, who had served in Nigeria both in the Education Department and the Administrative Service, and was at one time Resident

* A few of the West African cooks are very good but many of those employed by newcomers to the Coast know little about cooking. It is alleged that one of these received from his employer, when he was discharged, a certificate stating that he had been employed as a cook for a week, and that, of the seven dinners he had served up, four had been burnt offerings and three had been bloody sacrifices.

of Lagos Colony. In this position he had serving under him several European District Officers, and I have been told by more than one of these that it was a pleasure to work with him ; this is worth remembering when the absurd suggestion is made that European officers in West Africa dislike serving under Africans. It depends on the African. All the Europeans who knew Dr. Carr regarded him with great admiration, and I am glad to remember that he was once a colleague of mine. It was with great regret that I heard of his death in 1945. There are many Africans as clever, and perhaps as well educated, as Dr. Carr ; if there were more who were his equal in integrity and strength of character there would be more holding responsible posts in the Administration.

During my absence from Nigeria the Ikoyi Club, plans for which had begun to be formulated before I left Lagos, and of which I am an original member, had come into being. Unfortunately, the Golf Club, also at Ikoyi, continued to be run separately, which tended to the formation of cliques which a single club might have counteracted; the two clubs were only amalgamated later, after I had left Nigeria. I was for some time chairman of the Ikoyi Club, in which I took a great interest, and during this period we were able to build a swimming pool which added greatly to the amenities of the club. Sea-bathing in West Africa, which is very popular, is extremely dangerous owing to the heavy surf and strong undertow, and many persons lose their lives each year as a result of this ; swimming is practically impossible as no one can go in far enough in safety, and more swimming pools would be great assets.

Every Saturday night in Lagos there was a dance in one or other of the European clubs. The dances at the Ebute Metta* Club were very popular as dancing was out of doors, on tarpaulins stretched tightly over a concrete tennis court. At the other clubs the dancers sat, between dances, on the lawns outside the clubs, and many pleasant evenings were spent there. There was an excellent amateur dance orchestra, and sometimes the music was supplied by the bands of the Nigeria Regiment or of the Police Force. These regimental and police bands, both in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, are excellent ;

* Ebute Metta, a suburb of Lagos, is the headquarters of the Nigerian Railway administration.

the Africans are naturally musical, and with good instruments, and under a European bandmaster, their performances are highly creditable.* It is an interesting fact that some of the bandsmen, who can read music, cannot read anything else.

The return of Sir Donald Cameron to Nigeria in 1931 as Governor was a fortunate event for the country. (From 1925 to 1931 he had been Governor of Tanganyika.) It is a great pity that his return coincided with the worst period of the world-wide slump, which particularly affected the primary producers of West Africa. At that time the rigid financial policy applied to the colonies demanded a balanced budget every year, or, any rate, a serious attempt to balance the budget despite the unfortunate reactions which might follow. The falling revenues of Nigeria had therefore to be compensated for by drastic cuts in expenditure, which involved large reductions of staff and the retrenchment of experienced officers, and the cutting down of many services which were essential to the country.

The more far-sighted policy that has now been adopted, that a colony should have the services which it requires and not merely those which it can afford, is infinitely better. Under the old dispensation a colony would build up (often to the neglect of desirable social services) large financial reserves, ostensibly to meet a rainy day, but when the rainy day came the reserves would not be used and the budget would be balanced by a drastic economy which cut down the expenditure in such a way as to effect efficiency, and removed officers whose experience would have been invaluable in the future. In my view, it is in times of slump, when the local producers get smaller prices than usual for their crops and there is a general shortage of money, that the colonial governments should embark on a bold policy of expenditure on public works, which would provide employment and put money into circulation. It is at such times also, when the people are suffering from the effects of a falling market, the causes of which they cannot understand, that a full staff is needed to help and guide them through the difficult period; retrenchment of staff at such a moment is not justified and may well be disastrous.

I was present at the opening of the railway bridge over the river

* The Gold Coast Police Band visited England in 1947.

Benue in 1932. This bridge, some 2,584 feet long, cost the Nigerian government about £1,000,000, and was a questionable investment. It is true that it completed the Nigerian railway system, and speeded up the working of trains, but trains had been ferried across the Benue for some years without difficulty, and the speed of trains over this unremunerative section of the line was of little importance ; in any case, I do not believe that the convenience was worth the money spent, which could have been employed more usefully on social improvements. The bridge across the river Niger at Jebba, opened in 1916, is a different matter, as the railway that crosses this bridge is the main line between Lagos and Kano, and carries considerable traffic over the 700 miles that separate these two important centres. The total length of railway in Nigeria is about 1,900 miles, of which nearly 1,800 miles are of 3 ft. 6 in. gauge.

The cost of the Benue bridge referred to above, and of some part of the line that has an administrative rather than an economic value, has now been partially taken over by the Nigerian Government as a general liability, to the benefit of railway finance. Such burdens on the railway, and interest charges on the loans raised to cover this unremunerative expenditure made it necessary to charge a higher freight rate on the railway than some articles could easily bear. In the southern parts of Nigeria, also, public roads which ran almost parallel to the railway enabled motor transport to compete on unfair terms with the railway. The reasons for this were twofold. In the first place, the motor transport owners could take the cream of the traffic, refusing heavy, unremunerative freight which the railway was compelled by law to carry. Secondly, the African-owned motor transport was run on uneconomic lines, as the vehicles were not insured and no account was taken by the owners, in fixing their freight charges, of depreciation of the vehicles. This has led to difficulties in nearly every colony that owns a railway (and practically all colonial railways are Government-owned). From time to time committees have sat and made recommendations designed to protect the railway system, in which the local taxpayer is financially interested, against competition from individual transport owners. In my view it should be accepted that colonial railways cannot compete, over short distances up to say 200 miles, against motor

transport, and railway rates should be fixed on the understanding that the railway is not only a common carrier but serves the country in several other ways, and that any deficit on its working should be borne by the colonial budget. That the railways in tropical colonies have been important civilising influences cannot be denied, that they are an administrative convenience is obvious, and their economic value in transporting heavy produce to the ports for export does not depend entirely on the profit on charges made for freight.

But even if a financial loss on existing railways should be accepted there is no reason why the motor transport owner should be allowed to make an unreasonable profit at the public expense. He should pay a sufficient licence fee on his vehicle, he should be prevented from over-loading it to the damage of the roads and to the danger of other road users, and, above all, he should be required to safeguard the public by compulsory third-party insurance. It is not fair competition with the railway if a motor transport owner escapes from his reasonable liabilities. Too often in West Africa a lorry is bought on credit, run with excessive loads (and at excessive speed) and too little attention to running repairs, and finally thrown on the scrap-heap with little for the owner to show for his investment. Under such conditions it is easy for motor transport to undercut railway rates, and indeed to undercut the rates that would be charged by a properly organised motor transport company, which would maintain its vehicles properly and set aside from profits a reasonable sum to replace worn-out lorries. The African motor-owner seldom looks far enough ahead to realise that his profits during the life of his vehicle are largely illusory, and that at the end of the vehicle's life he will be no richer than when he started, if indeed he has not run himself into debt. But the pride of ownership of a new lorry, even if it has not been paid for, and the joy of driving it, coupled with the excitements of the road and the long-drawn-out conversations with friends in every village that is passed through, more than make up for the absence of profit; in the end careless driving or sheer bad luck may bring the lorry and this happy life to an untimely end, and the philosophic African will then look for another occupation until he can once again find the money (or a trusting creditor) for another try at lorry-owning.

The African is often extremely dangerous when in charge of a motor car or lorry. He appears to be quite devoid of nerves, and takes the most appalling risks with complete equanimity. Yet he can be a most careful and skilful driver. I had a chauffeur in Lagos who was excellent in every way; he was a member of the family of Docemo, the "king" of Lagos from whom subsequent Obas were descended, and might have become Oba of Lagos when a vacancy occurred during his service with me had it not been for his too close association, as a chauffeur, with Europeans. Again, in the Gold Coast I had another excellent chauffeur, who never let me down in the long journeys I made by car, over bad roads as well as good ones, during my tours of inspection.

I have always been anxious to use an English-made car in the colonies, whenever that was possible, and I think that my Morris Cowley was the only English-made car in the Bahamas when I took it there in 1926. But I am bound to confess that English cars are less satisfactory than American ones on the roads in the colonies I have known. English cars have not the horse-power nor the ground clearance that is necessary on bad roads and in bad weather although they are excellent for work on town streets and some of the main country roads. British motor manufacturers will have to study and cater for colonial conditions if they wish to get any share in this rapidly expanding market.

When I was acting Chief Secretary (as mentioned above, I filled this office for most of my second period of service in Nigeria) it was one of my duties to preside over the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council which examined the annual estimates of expenditure; this duty now falls to the Financial Secretary, a post created after my departure from Nigeria. Each Head of Department in turn attended the meeting of the Committee while the estimates of his department were being examined and answered questions about them. Some Heads of Department were very helpful to the Committee, giving the information asked for with frankness and courtesy; others were not so polite. I have always found unofficial members of Legislative Councils, and especially African members, reasonable and sympathetic to those Heads of Department who answer their questions courteously. In most cases

African unofficial members were more concerned about the details affecting the salaries of African officials than they were about the larger implications of government policy. This is a failing I have observed in every colonial legislature I have known,* and on several occasions in the Gold Coast the Financial Secretary, in replying to the budget debate, has drawn attention to the absence of any financial criticism of the budget. For example, on one occasion he pointed out that "although the debate has covered a very wide field, very little reference to finance has been made in it, and scarcely any reference at all to the budget."† It was usually left to the European unofficial members to comment on the principles of the budget, and its implications.

Most of the members of the Legislative Council in Nigeria (and a minority of members in the Gold Coast) came from the ranks of the self-styled "Intelligentsia," as do most of the politically-minded people of these colonies. It seems to me that this is a very arrogant title for any body of persons to claim, and in West Africa it is extended to cover practically anyone who can boast of a secondary education; I was actually told once by an African that he was one of the intelligentsia of West Africa, a fact which I should never have suspected had I not had it from the man himself.

The misuse of English words by Africans to which I have referred above,‡ and the incorrect translation of African words into English, have led to many ridiculous misunderstandings. In Nigeria the title of "King" has not been confined to the more important Chiefs, but has been recklessly bestowed on the headmen of unimportant villages through the wrong, and quite unnecessary, anglicising of the native word. This fact, and the inclusion in the various "royal families" of even the most distant relatives of the reigning Chiefs, has resulted in the astonishing number of "princes" and "princesses" to be found in Nigeria; when these people travel they not infrequently appropriate to themselves the honorific of "Royal Highness." In this respect the people of the Gold Coast are far wiser; they call the Chiefs by their own native titles, which is more dignified than

* Except in the Bahamas, where conditions are different.

† Gold Coast *Legislative Council Debates*, Session 1943, Issue No. 1, p. 182.

‡ See p. 45.

giving them English ones which are not appropriate. The Nigerians have just as dignified titles, and would be well advised to use them. The principal Chief of Lagos has gained rather than lost in dignity by being styled Oba instead of King.

The missionaries in Nigeria, as in other parts of West Africa, have done a great deal for the people. Quite apart from the spread of Christianity under conditions of great difficulty, they have brought to the country the advantages of education. For many years, until the colonial governments began to realise their own responsibilities in the matter, the missionaries provided all the education that there was ; in view of this the growing tendency among Africans to resent missionary influence in education appears ungrateful, and is, I am sure, not in the best interests of the people. I do not believe, however, that this attitude will endure ; it is probably due to increasing "national" feeling and the desire of the African to control to a greater extent what he considers to be the most important influence on the future of his race.

In Nigeria the missionary has to contend with the rising tide of Islam, which offers to the native of tropical Africa a more comfortable religion than Christianity. This is particularly the case in the important matter of marriage. Polygamy has long been an established institution in Nigeria and a religion which insists on monogamy is heavily handicapped in competition with one that is not so strict. The Native African Church, modelled otherwise on the Church of England, permits polygamy among its members, and has therefore attracted to itself many African Christians who aspire to the social distinction of the Christian but are not prepared to comply with this rule of Christianity. Very few converts are made from Islam to the Christian religion and it has been estimated that ten heathen are converted to Islam for every one who becomes a Christian. But for all this Christianity is spreading and although in many cases the converts are Christians only in name (as are so many Europeans) there are a number of Africans of whose sincere and practical Christianity there can be no question.

Many of the European missionaries who have worked in West Africa were persons of outstanding character and ability. There have been some who, on account of limited education and a narrow

outlook, have been an embarrassment to the government and little use to their own cause, but they are fortunately exceptions. Lord Lugard's promise, at the time of the occupation of Northern Nigeria, that the Muslim religion would not be interfered with and that all men would be free to worship God as they chose, has restricted missionary enterprise in Muslim areas, and this led in the past to serious misunderstandings, but on the whole the missions and the governments have got on extremely well. Nearly all of the missions, Catholic as well as Protestant, have an African clergy, and there have been several African bishops of the Church of England.

I believe that the missions would do better, even as Christianising influences, if they took up medical as well as educational work. Medical missions would have an appeal to the African mind as important even as missionary schools, and, if the missions worked as well with the government in medical as in educational matters, would do a great deal of good for the people. Especially in leper settlements and suchlike institutions, which require a real missionary spirit, the missions could do work that the government, with the best intentions, could hardly emulate.

The medical work of the government in the West African colonies has been remarkable but far too much still remains to be done. The fashion today is to over-emphasise the admitted fact that prevention is better than cure, and to treat the provision of adequate hospital accommodation, and the healing of the sick, as matters of comparatively slight importance. My views on this subject are set out in the following extract from a despatch* that I wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies when I was Governor of the Gold Coast :

"It is important that the prevention of disease should be regarded as the main function of the Medical and Health Departments, and every effort must be made not only to take such steps as will eradicate preventable diseases but to impress upon the people by education and propaganda the importance of preventive measures. At the same time it is necessary that adequate measures should be taken for the cure of those who are ill, and this involves the provision of considerable hospital accommodation and of health centres in towns

* No. 222 of the 26th July, 1944, published as Gold Coast Sessional Paper, No. 11 of 1944.

or villages where hospitals do not exist. As regards hospitals and other public institutions I consider it of primary importance that a minimum standard of decency should be attained and that the public should not be shocked by the sight of overcrowded wards and insanitary surroundings in Government hospitals. While there can be no doubt of the great importance of preventive measures, public opinion will not be satisfied if those who are actually sick are neglected in favour of keeping well those who have so far been fortunate in escaping serious illness. It is small comfort to a patient and to his relatives to be told that he would not have become ill if the preventive measures advocated by the Health Department had been observed, and it will indeed make the people antagonistic to preventive measures if they find that Government attaches little importance to the cure of the sick. I stress this point because I observe a tendency to disparage Government's responsibilities to the sick (in hospitals and other ways) as compared with the importance of preventive measures. I am well aware of the greater importance of prevention but, especially among the more primitive tribes, the sense of proportion in this respect will be of slow growth and will be, if anything, retarded by any failure on the part of the Government to provide adequate medical attention for the sick and by so doing inspire the people with the belief in the good intentions of the Government and the efficacy of European medicine."

Actually, even in the prevention of disease I believe that better value could have been obtained for the expenditure incurred. Malaria is a serious scourge in tropical countries but it is not the only menace to the public health. Vast sums have been spent on anti-malaria drainage* and in many cases there has been no material reduction in the incidence of malaria to show as a result. Some of this money could more wisely have been laid out in other ways, for instance in the rehousing of the people and the clearing of those slums which breed disease in every tropical town, or in the provision of water supplies. I should place water supplies and rehousing as first and second respectively in the priority list for needed improvements in every colony. Very often the supply of fresh water to a town or village has been held up because it has been impossible to

* For instance, at Accra and Takoradi, during the war of 1939-45.

supply water that was chemically pure ; meanwhile the people have continued to drink the much less pure water already available to them, or to go so short of water as to suffer considerably. Too often in the colonies, in other matters besides water supplies, the search for perfection, or the fear of making a mistake, has resulted in nothing being done.*

One of the great handicaps with which the Medical Department in each colony is faced is the existence of private practice. Medical Officers receive a salary from the government for which they are expected to treat government servants, the inmates of the prisons, and such members of the general population as cannot afford to pay themselves for medical treatment. Some of the Medical Officers are specially assigned to the "Health" branch of the department, for preventive rather than curative work, and receive an allowance in lieu of private practice, but all others are (or were) allowed to augment their income by fees received from private patients. This has led, in the past, to considerable difficulty in the posting of Medical Officers. The senior men considered that they should be posted to the stations where large sums could be obtained from private practice, and there was constant dissatisfaction on the part of those posted to up-country and therefore less remunerative stations. I have heard fantastic stories of the annual incomes derived by some government Medical Officers from private practice in Opobo and other coastal towns of Nigeria, and even allowing for considerable exaggeration, the amounts received must have been considerable ; the proof of this lies in the scramble (in some cases very undignified) for these stations.

I believe that a better and more contented medical service would result from the abolition of all private practice, except perhaps in consultation ; if necessary, salaries could be increased to make up for the loss of fees, and fees received from those patients who were able to pay could be paid into the public treasury. In British Honduras, however, when I tried to make this change, which was acceptable

* The "expert" is often a handicap to the colonies. It has been pointed out (see "Some Problems of Tropical Economy," by J. S. Furnival, in *Fabian Colonial Essays*, p. 179) that "the expert is a specialist in his own subject but not in native life. He tries to adapt native life to scientific principles ; welfare requires the adaptation of scientific principles to native life . . . the expert looks at life through departmental blinkers."

to all but one of the Medical Officers there, there was serious opposition from the unofficial members of the Legislative Council, who maintained that the public (that is the public with sufficient money to pay fees) would not receive as good medical attention if the Medical Officers were not allowed to receive the fees paid for their services. One advantage that would result from the abolition of private practice for government Medical Officers is the greater opening there would be for private practitioners ; there could never be too many doctors in the West African colonies. Today there are very few private practitioners and nearly all of these work in a few of the largest towns.

In May, 1934, I was offered the appointment of Governor and Commander-in-Chief of British Honduras. Although flattered by the offer I hesitated for some time before accepting it, partly because I did not want to leave Nigeria again, and partly because I stood to gain nothing financially by the transfer, as the British Honduras salary was not much greater than the salary I was drawing as Deputy Chief Secretary of Nigeria and the expenses of a Governor were naturally higher. Moreover, I knew that the post of Chief Secretary would soon become vacant and that I had a reasonable chance of succeeding to it, which I should greatly have preferred. Incidentally, had I remained in Nigeria as Chief Secretary I should have been entitled to a higher pension than I am now drawing. Finally, after taking the advice of a friend for whose judgment I had great respect, I decided to accept the offer, and I have not, in the end, regretted it.

The announcement of my appointment was received by the people of Nigeria in a way that surprised me. I was overwhelmed with congratulations, and the newspapers were very flattering in their references to me. One paper, after mentioning my work in the Secretariat, added "... he has made more contributions towards an understanding between man and man than any officer similarly placed can boast of, and the Lagos Library stands today as a monument to his ideas as to how best he could utilise his spare time for the benefit of his fellow-men . . . The greatest or perhaps the best service which could be rendered in this country towards the removal of racial misunderstanding is the latest institution created by Mr. Burns, namely, the Lagos Dinner Club, which has been functioning

in a most effective, if unobtrusive way and is usefully serving its purpose.”* I received visits of congratulation from the Oba of Lagos and his White Cap Chiefs, and telegrams from other Chiefs in Nigeria. On the 15th June I was entertained at a farewell banquet by a hundred European and African gentlemen, and many kind things were said of me in the speeches which followed. A very old friend of mine, the late Sir Walter Buchanan-Smith,† was unable to be present, but sent a message which I greatly appreciated ; in it he said : “ . . . His loss to the up-country officer like myself will be very real, for in the art of helping he has few rivals.”

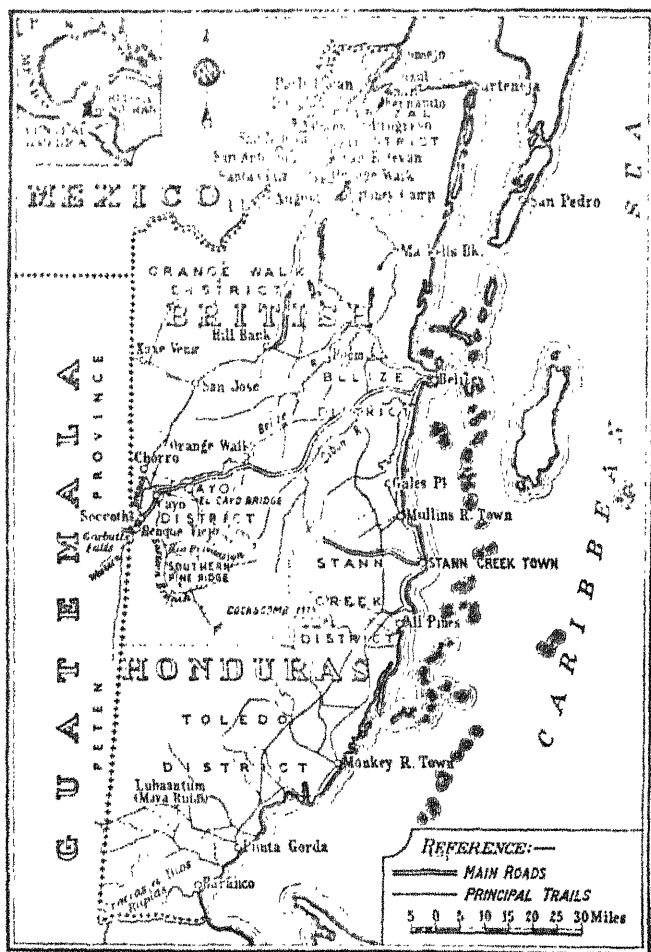
In my reply to the speeches I said : “ . . . I am particularly glad that my hosts of this evening are of both races, and from both the official and non-official community, and that the last public function which I shall have the honour of attending in Nigeria should provide so noteworthy an example of that co-operation in which I am so interested . . . In saying goodbye to you, and through you to all my friends in Nigeria, I should like to add that it is a great comfort to my wife and myself, in our natural regret at leaving a country that we like, to be able to feel that we carry with us to British Honduras the good wishes of the friends we are leaving behind.”‡

When my wife and I left Lagos on the 23rd June, 1934, we were seen off by a great number of our friends, including the African and European staff of the Secretariat, and the buglers of the Nigerian Police sounded the “Hausa Farewell” as the steamer in which we were travelling left the harbour. We were both sad at leaving Lagos, as we thought for the last time ; actually, we returned to Lagos eight years later for a few months.

* The *Nigerian Daily Times* of 19th May, 1934.

† Sir Walter Buchanan-Smith, Lieutenant-Governor of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, known to his friends as “B-S,” was one of the most popular of Nigerian officials. After his retirement in 1935 he undertook many public duties, including that of acting Governor of the Seychelles in 1939, and Honorary Secretary General of the Royal Empire Society from 1941 until his death in 1945.

‡ As reported in the *Nigerian Daily Times*.



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CHAPTER VI

BRITISH HONDURAS

I "KISSED HANDS" on my appointment as Governor of British Honduras on the 2nd October, 1934, and a month later I arrived in the colony, with my wife, to assume my duties, having called at Grand Turk, the principal island of the Turks and Caicos group, and at Jamaica, on the way. On this voyage a fellow passenger from England to Jamaica was Sir Edward Denham, who had just been appointed Governor of that colony; he was kind enough to invite us to stay at King's House for a few days while we were in Jamaica.

My predecessor in British Honduras had been Sir Harold Kittermaster, who had been appointed as recently as 1932; he was transferred to Nyasaland, where he died in 1938. Before him, Sir John Burdon had been Governor of British Honduras from 1925 to 1931.

Although this colony is often spoken of as though it were one of the West Indies, it lies on the mainland of Central America. In area about the size of Wales, it is bounded on the north by Mexico, on the west and south by Guatemala, and on the east by the Caribbean Sea. The Republic of Honduras, often referred to as "Spanish Honduras," is very near, to the south-east across the Bay of Honduras. A number of low-lying islets, or "cayes," run in a line roughly parallel with the coast of British Honduras. Along the coast the mainland is flat and swampy, but in the interior it is hilly, the Cockscomb mountains rising to a height of 3,680 feet. There are many rivers, some of them navigable for over 100 miles, and much of the interior is covered by thick forest.

Belize, the capital, a town with a population of about 17,000, lies at the mouth of the Belize river, on low, marshy ground only a few inches above sea level. So low-lying is the town, and so waterlogged the land on which it is built, that the ground level of the cemetery has to be raised by some feet to allow graves to be dug of sufficient depth. (In order to overcome this difficulty, surface vaults were built in 1886 at the west end of the town, but the people

objected to the bodies of their deceased relatives and friends being placed in concrete pigeon-holes and there were demonstrations against the engineer who built the vaults.) The site of Belize is one of the least suitable places for a capital in the whole of the colony, but it was selected at a time when logwood and mahogany, the principal exports at the time of the first settlement, could easily be obtained on the banks of the Belize river, and there was safe anchorage off the mouth of the river, behind the cayes, for the small vessels of the period. Moreover, there was always then the danger of attack by the Spaniards and Belize offered the advantage to the settlers that they could retire up-river if the Spaniards attacked from the sea, or could move to one of the off-shore cayes if the attack came from landward. There was an opportunity after the disastrous hurricane of 1931 to remove the headquarters to a healthier and more convenient site, but there were too many vested interests in Belize, and too much Government money already sunk there, to make such a move popular or practicable.

This hurricane had such an effect on the fortunes of the colony that the people speak of "before the hurricane" and "after the hurricane" as of two widely separated epochs. There had been no previous hurricane in the colony within living memory and the comfortable belief had grown up that British Honduras lay outside the hurricane zone. Therefore, when hurricane warnings were received from the Washington Weather Bureau early in September, no one in Belize paid much attention to them and few precautions were taken. The storm reached Belize on the 10th September, 1931, a public holiday, and much destruction was done in the first stage of the hurricane. As the centre of the hurricane passed over the town most of the people mistook the calm which always accompanies it for the end of the storm and ventured out into the streets, only to be caught by the higher wind which blew, in the second stage of the hurricane, from the opposite direction, and by the tidal wave which followed. Belize, as I have said, is only a few inches above sea-level, and the wall of water which swept over the town was several feet high. Large lighters were lifted on the crest of the wave over the sea-wall and dashed against the houses; the water itself was enough to sweep away many of the smaller houses and to drown those caught

beneath the ruins of the buildings blown down earlier. At least a thousand persons lost their lives.

The country which is now known as British Honduras was at one time the centre of a great Maya empire, to which I will refer later. By the beginning of the seventeenth century there were practically no Mayas in those areas within easy reach of the coast, and today the few thousands who survive inhabit villages in the interior. The Spaniards, however, claimed for themselves the whole of Central America, although they lived for the most part on the high lands of the interior and avoided the swampy coast. A report to the Council of Trade in 1705 describes the coast of Yucatan, just north of British Honduras, as "a great part drowned," a description which would apply to this colony today. In 1755, after capturing Belize and burning the houses in one of their numerous raids, the Spaniards left the place, saying that it was only fit for the English! It is indeed doubtful whether any other nation would have built a town at such a spot.

Although otherwise inhospitable, the country around the Bay of Honduras contained quantities of logwood trees which the Spaniards exported to Europe for use in the manufacture of dyes. About the year 1638 a party of British buccaneers* settled near the mouth of the Belize river† and began to cut logwood for export to England. The Spaniards strongly objected to this infringement of their monopoly of a valuable trade (logwood was fetching then as much as £100 a ton), and made unceasing efforts to drive out the British. Sometimes, as in the fight at Labouring Creek in 1754, the settlers defeated the Spanish troops, but time and again the British settlements were raided and destroyed, the inhabitants being driven away or carried into captivity‡; but on each occasion the dauntless Baymen, as they were called, returned to carry on with their enterprises in defiance of the Spanish menace. The fluctuations in the population of the

* Their leader is said to have been a Scotsman, named Wallace or Willis, and the name Belize is thought by some to be a corruption of his name.

† For a time their headquarters were on St. George's Caye, some nine miles from the river mouth.

‡ A particularly brutal raid on St. George's Caye in 1779 resulted in the British civilian prisoners, men, women, and children, being carried off to Yucatan, marched for 300 miles through forest and swamp, and finally imprisoned in Havana; the survivors were allowed to go to Jamaica in 1782.

Belize settlement afford some indication of the effects of Spanish raids. In 1670 there were 700 white residents ; in 1745 the population had fallen to 50 whites and 120 negroes, to rise again, by 1764, to over 1,500 in the Northern District alone.

Throughout this period the British government did little to protect the settlers, although the Governor of Jamaica, who exercised an indefinite control over the settlement, as far back as 1670 urged the protection of "these new sucking colonies."* The settlers governed themselves under a constitution they had devised, referred to later as "The Ancient Usages and Customs of the Settlement." This included a Public Meeting of all the free inhabitants, which elected not more than seven unpaid Magistrates, and in later years one of these Magistrates was appointed Superintendent. The laws of the Settlement, and the unwritten constitution, were codified by Admiral Sir William Burnaby in 1765, at the request of the settlers, and a Superintendent was sent out from England ; Burnaby's Laws remained in force until 1840.

In the meantime British diplomacy was surrendering what the settlers had fought so hard to maintain. In 1763 and again in 1783 the Spanish claim to the country was recognised by treaty, which, however, granted the right to the British to cut logwood within defined limits ; no fortifications and no form of government were to be allowed as the settlers would be under Spanish "protection." What this protection meant was shown in 1763, when the Spanish Governor of Yucatan ordered the deportation of all the British settlers at Belize ; his action was later disavowed by the Spanish government, but not until a naval demonstration had been made.

The last and decisive struggle with the Spaniards took place in 1798. War had broken out between Great Britain and Spain, and a strong Spanish force, consisting of 31 vessels carrying 500 seamen and 2,000 soldiers, set out from Yucatan to reduce the settlement. The attack had been expected for some time and the settlers were well aware of the danger. A Public Meeting was held to decide whether the settlement should be evacuated, but by a majority of 14 it was decided that the settlers should remain and fight. Against

* In addition to the Belize settlement there were others on the Bay Islands and on the Mosquito Coast of Central America. The Mosquito Indians were always friendly to the British and hostile to the Spaniards.

the strength of the Spanish force there were opposed the settlers and their slaves, with one British sloop-of-war, the *Merlin*, and a couple of hundred regular soldiers who, in fact, took no part in the subsequent battle. Three local sloops were provided with a gun apiece, and some logwood rafts were strengthened to take each one nine-pounder gun and a crew of sixteen men. After a few days of preliminary skirmishes the Spanish ships began their attack on the British force assembled near St. George's Caye on the 10th September. The ensuing action, in which the Spaniards suffered many casualties and the British none, lasted for two and a half hours, when the Spaniards cut their cables and retired, pursued by the British vessels and boats rowed by slaves. The Governor of Jamaica, reporting the victory, spoke of the firm conduct of the settlers "in putting the port . . . into a respectable state of defence, as well as the gallant manner in which it was maintained." Captain Moss, of the *Merlin*, reported that "the spirit of the Negro Slaves that manned our small crafts was wonderful, and the good management of the different Commanders does them great credit." It was indeed a creditable victory against great odds, and the people of British Honduras remember it still with justifiable pride. The 10th September is regarded by them as the birthday of the colony, and each year a procession of Belize people marches to Government House and presents an Address to the Governor, referring with pride to the battle of 1798, and reaffirming their proven loyalty. I remember with satisfaction the Address presented to me on the 10th September, 1939; the people of British Honduras have proved in war since then that they meant what they said in that Address. Since I left the colony I have sent a telegram of greeting each year on the 10th September through the Governor to the people of British Honduras.

After their defeat in 1798 the Spaniards did not further molest the British settlers. The rule of the elected magistrates was gradually superseded by that of a Superintendent appointed by the British government, under the loose control of the Governor of Jamaica. There were, inevitably, many disputes between the Superintendents and the settlers, who had been accustomed for so long to manage their own affairs. One Superintendent, Colonel Despard, had to be removed in 1791 on account of his despotic attitude to the people;

he was hanged in England twelve years later for high treason. In 1862 the Settlement was declared a Colony, and was placed under a Lieutenant-Governor subordinate to the Governor of Jamaica. In 1869 the practical self-government which had long existed was abandoned, when the legislature requested that British Honduras should be made a Crown Colony, with an official majority in the Legislative Council.* Gradually the official majority in the legislature was reduced, until today British Honduras has a Legislative Council with a majority of unofficial members, the Governor retaining, however, certain "reserve" powers.†

Such was the early history of a British colony, built up by the courage and resource of settlers without government assistance and sometimes in spite of action taken by the British government. A Governor of Jamaica in 1842 declared it to be "one of the most remarkable instances of British enterprise and energy." The settlers, during a period when they were in constant peril from Spanish attack, set up for themselves a workable form of government which lasted for nearly two centuries. They won for themselves the loyalty of their slaves, who fought by their side most gallantly in various battles against Spanish troops. That they did so is probably due to the fact that the slaves were better treated in British Honduras than in the West Indian sugar colonies; master and man alike worked in the forest under the same unhealthy and difficult conditions, and both were armed as a protection against Spaniards and wild animals. In the early days of the Settlement there was little danger from Indians; it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Indian raids from Mexico became a danger to the northern districts of the colony.

As the value of the logwood industry declined the demand for mahogany grew, and mahogany began to be exported from about 1770. British Honduras mahogany is of the highest quality and probably better than that from any other country. Unfortunately, most of the accessible mahogany trees on the banks of the navigable rivers have been cut, and the logs have now to be transported for long distances by tractor or rail to the nearest river or creek; they

* For an explanation of the reason for this, see p. 263.

† See p. 275.

are floated downstream when the rivers are in flood, collected in "booms," and then made up in rafts for removal to the sawmill at Belize or to the steamers anchored off the river mouth. The skill of the Negro forest workers in cutting down and handling the huge mahogany trees in the forest is amazing, and when some hundreds of British Honduras foresters came to Scotland in 1941 to fell timber for war purposes the trees of Scotland must have seemed very small to men accustomed to the giant trees of their own forests.

In the old days, when the logs had to be hauled by cattle to the nearest river, the mahogany season lasted much longer than it does now when faster mechanical haulage has been introduced. Moreover, the care of the working cattle employed a number of men throughout the year. The mahogany worker likes and understands his work; he despises agriculture and has no knowledge of it. Large numbers of men are engaged by contract at the beginning of the mahogany season, receiving advances on their pay (a bad system)* and then travelling to the interior where they live in "camps" consisting of rough wooden huts. At the end of the season they return to Belize, where most of them are recruited, spend quickly the money they have earned, from which their advances have been deducted, and then hang around the town waiting hopefully for something to turn up to keep them alive until the next mahogany season begins. They are always cheerful and optimistic.

Another industry, carried on very largely by the Maya Indians who live in the interior, is the tapping of the Sapodilla tree from which chicle (pronounced chickly) is obtained; chicle is the basis of chewing gum and it is an interesting fact that during the great slump in America in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties there was a marked decline in the demand for chicle. The Maya Indians are also the best agriculturists in the colony, although their practice of shifting cultivation is very wasteful; they clear a small area of the larger trees and bush and burn off the remainder, plant crops for a year or two and then, having exhausted the land, move off to another spot where the operation is repeated.

The planting of bananas has been tried several times, at first with

* Like that in the Bahamas sponging industry, see p. 87.

considerable success, but diseases* rapidly spread and large areas have had to be abandoned. The growing of bananas is the one form of agriculture which is popular with the Negro farmers of British Honduras and at intervals it pays them well. Coconuts are grown along the coast and on most of the cayes. Sugar-cane is grown in the north of the colony and in some areas in the south. One of the most remarkable things about this industry is the number of years that the cane is ratooned† on some plantations ; it is said that ratooning for forty years has been known ! The cohune (or cohoon) palm flourishes in the southern parts of the colony ; it bears a nut with a very hard shell, which is difficult to crack without damage to the kernel. The kernels yield a specially high-grade oil, and the shell can be converted into a charcoal which is used in gas-masks. The grapefruit produced in British Honduras is of very high quality, and before the war was used in the most expensive restaurants in London. Cassava, maize, beans and rice are grown for local consumption.

When I arrived in the colony at the end of 1934 conditions were very serious. The effects of the hurricane and the general world slump, which had reduced the demand for mahogany, had caused widespread unemployment and misery. The colonial treasury was bankrupt and the colony was only able to balance its budget by means of an annual grant from the Imperial Treasury. A report by a special commissioner, Sir Alan Pim, who had been sent out earlier that year, *advocated the ruthless cutting down of expenditure and the imposition of additional taxes in a hopeless attempt to balance the budget.* Serious riots had occurred a few weeks before my arrival.

Subventions from the Imperial Treasury are granted to impoverished colonies on two conditions, which, on the face of them, are not unreasonable. One is that even where there is an unofficial majority in the local legislature the Governor shall have special powers of control in all financial matters,‡ and the other is that the annual estimates of expenditure, and all supplementary expenditure,

* Panama Disease and Leaf-spot or Sigatoka Disease.

† A ratoon is a new shoot or sprout sprung up from the root of the sugar-cane after it has been cut.

‡ See p. 276.

must receive the approval in advance of the British Treasury officials ; as I point out elsewhere* the exercise of my powers in financial matters led to an early clash with the unofficial members of the Legislative Council. The control of the Treasury over expenditure led to vexatious delays and a parsimony in administration at a time when the condition of the colony made it more than ever necessary that speedy and generous expenditure should be authorised. I can imagine nothing more deadening to a colony than "Treasury control." The object is, of course, to protect the British taxpayer from unreasonable or unnecessary burdens, by limiting the expenditure in a colony which cannot pay its own way ; but I question whether this object is achieved by the method adopted. If a Governor cannot be trusted to use his discretion in the appointment of an additional junior clerk without reference to a Treasury official in Whitehall, then, in my view, that Governor should not have been appointed to the post he holds. And if the Governor and his senior officials and the members of the Legislative Council have examined the annual estimates of expenditure in detail, as they have to do, then it seems quite unnecessary that approval of these estimates should be delayed for months while comparatively junior Treasury officials check the details over again in London. So far as I can remember, in no instance did the Treasury ever disallow any item inserted in the draft estimates while I was Governor and nothing resulted from this scrutiny except delay. Year after year work was held up at the beginning of the financial year because the Estimates sent home months before had not yet been approved ; the result was that the dry season would end and the rains would arrive making it impossible to begin on outdoor work, such as the construction of roads, until the financial year was nearly ended. Let me add that the Colonial Office was not to blame for these delays ; the officials of that office did all they could to hurry the Treasury, but their efforts were of little avail. No doubt also the Treasury officials themselves were overworked and were not to blame ; but the system was a disastrous one and I hope it will be ended.

The one thing that saved British Honduras in these difficult days was the existence of the Colonial Development Fund, from which

* See p. 276.

I was able to obtain grants for the colony. It appeared to me that the mahogany industry could not support the large proportion of the population that had depended on it in the past and that the only hope lay in the development of agriculture and the settlement on the land of such of the unemployed as really wanted to work. Apart from the disinclination of the coloured people for agricultural work there was the difficulty of obtaining access to suitable land owing to the absence of roads. Roads had not in the past been necessary to the mahogany industry and the only means of communication were the rivers. Overland travel was confined to narrow paths, through thick bush and often across swamps; those who had to travel by land generally rode horses, while their belongings were carried by pack mules. I have travelled along a so-called road in British Honduras where the water was sometimes up to my horse's girths; when we came to a river my luggage and myself were ferried across by canoe while the horses and pack mules swam. When I arrived in the colony there were only a few miles of motorable road and to a great extent these ceased to be motorable after rain. A few days after my arrival in Belize my car sank to its axles in one of the streets of the town! It was suggested to me that the construction of roads had been deliberately discouraged by the mahogany contractors, who had influence with the government, in order to hamper agriculture and leave a large floating population which could be drawn on when required for casual labour in the mahogany season; I doubt whether there was any such machiavellian idea, but there is no doubt that many of the leading people in the colony were against the construction of roads, which they considered an unjustified expense. Believing as I do that roads are essential to civilisation and development, I was not influenced by this opposition, and I applied for assistance from the Colonial Development Fund for the construction of roads; this assistance was forthcoming, and before I left the colony I had the satisfaction of travelling over more than a hundred miles of new roads.

While the construction of these roads was desirable in itself, at the same time it provided work for a great many people and to this extent relieved the unemployment problem. Settlement areas were laid out in those parts made accessible by roads, but the people were

slow to take to agriculture. Many so-called farmers in these settlements came to Belize every week-end to see their friends and enjoy themselves, leaving the farms to the care of Providence. I was also able to get a loan to finance the construction of a central sugar factory in the north of the colony and this revived the industry and gave employment.*

Other grants from the Colonial Development Fund improved the amenities of Belize. The town lies, as I have said, only a few inches above sea level; when I arrived most of the town was little better than a swamp, with houses raised on wooden or concrete posts some feet above the waterlogged ground. There were no surface drains to carry off rain-water and when the streets were higher than the adjoining lots the water flowed into the lots and turned them into lakes; when the lots were higher than the streets the process was reversed and the streets turned into miniature rivers or into swamps impassable to motor traffic. In spite of the difficulty of grading, owing to the small elevation above sea level, shallow concrete drains were constructed to take off surface water, while the lots and the streets were raised some inches by earth and pipeshank filling. Pipeshank is a form of coral found in great quantities in the sea near Belize; it is recovered by a dredger and sent in by a barge to the town. Before I left a suction dredger had also been ordered which was intended to reclaim swampy areas by pumping sand on to them.

But perhaps the most serious hardship of the people of Belize was the absence of potable water. In spite of a fairly high rainfall and the neighbourhood of a large river there was no piped water supply and each house stored its own water in tanks or barrels, filled from the roof catchment after rain. The larger houses, with their larger catchment and storage, were not so badly off, although even at Government House it was necessary to be economical in the use of water towards the end of the dry season. The condition of the poorer people was deplorable. Living in what was little better than a swamp during the rainy season, in the dry season they often did not have enough fresh water even for drinking, let alone for washing. A few small Government vats in the town supplemented their own inadequate storage, which often consisted of a single barrel, a fertile

* See p. 174.

breeding place for mosquitoes. Men, women, and small children waited for hours every day during the dry season to get each a bucketful of water from the Government vats for which they paid a small sum they could ill afford, while those who still had water in their tanks locked them up carefully to prevent their neighbours from helping themselves. As it was impossible to get the necessary funds to instal a proper water supply for Belize, I applied for and obtained a grant from the Colonial Development Fund to provide large steel tanks, on concrete bases, to store water caught on the roofs of public buildings, churches and schools. From each of these tanks there was a distribution system to stand-pipes in convenient parts of the town, from which the people could obtain, without charge, fresh water throughout the dry season. Sooner or later a piped supply from a point high up the river will be installed, but in the meantime the tank supply, provided by the Development Fund grant, has saved the poorer people of Belize from much unnecessary suffering.

In order to give direct encouragement to agriculture and to avoid the danger of farmers being left with unsaleable crops on their hands, the Government undertook to buy all grain produced at a fixed minimum price over a definite period. This was a great boon to the farmers and resulted in a marked increase in production. In one area the Maya Indian farmers had been accustomed to carry their corn,* on their backs, for distances of from twenty to thirty miles to the nearest town where they could hope to sell it; there was no proper road, and the heavily-laden men had to cross streams and miles of swamp on their journey. Having arrived in the town they would offer the corn for sale to one merchant after another, only to be told on many occasions that there was a surplus of corn on the market and that their produce was not required; finally, faced with the alternative of carrying the corn back to their villages, the unfortunate farmers would dispose of it at a fraction of its value. The Government therefore provided the necessary bins in which the corn could be stored, and also a rice mill. To the official opening of this mill I caused the Maya Chiefs to be invited, and when the ceremony was over I took one of them to show him how it worked; he saw the paddy put in the mill coming out as cleaned rice at the other end,

* Maize or Indian corn.

but when I asked him whether he did not think this a good arrangement, feeling that he must have been impressed by this labour-saving machinery, he quietly replied that his women did the same thing with a stick. Such rebuffs are no doubt very good for the enthusiastic administrator, anxious to "improve" conditions in a backward country! Mention of this incident reminds me of something similar in the Gold Coast, when an attempt was being made to provide villages in the Northern Territories with a water supply. Water was brought to one village, by pipeline, from a stream some three miles away, from which the village women had had in the past to carry it; the old Chief did not appear to be as enthusiastic over this amenity as we had hoped, and on being asked what was troubling him he pointed out that the women would certainly be getting into mischief if they did not have to spend hours every day in fetching water. He may have been right, although I think his attitude was wrong. But this sort of thing reminds us that many of the material advantages which we take pride in introducing to the colonies may have social results which we cannot yet appreciate. For this reason we may not always be right when we insist on giving to unsophisticated people what we consider is good for them rather than what they want.

The population of British Honduras, some 58,000 in all, comes from many different stocks, but there is a great deal of intermixture which makes racial classification difficult and unreliable. There is a handful of whites from Europe and the United States and a large proportion of these is of Scottish descent; there were several families bearing the good name Burns, and I can only hope that in years to come I will not be regarded as the progenitor of all those bearing the name. There are also many people of Latin descent from Mexico and Guatemala, some pure Spanish and some of mixed Spanish and Indian blood; they all speak Spanish more fluently than English. In the interior are the Maya Indians, on the coast from Stann Creek southwards are the "black" Caribs, and chiefly in Belize but also in small numbers throughout the colony are the "Creoles,"* nearly all of whom are descendants of African slaves.

* Creole originally meant a *white* person born in the West Indies; it has come to mean anyone locally born, other than aborigines, whether white or coloured.

The surviving Mayas in British Honduras, who speak Spanish as well as their own language, are the degenerate descendants of a highly civilised people, who established a strong empire in Central America at an early date, probably in the first century B.C. They were proficient in architecture (although they never understood the principle of the true arch), in pottery (although they never used the potter's wheel), and in textile arts, and they used a hieroglyphic script and a very complicated calendar of great accuracy which showed a knowledge of astronomy. In British Honduras there are the remains of many large stone buildings and a number of inscribed stelæ have been found, some of which are now in the British Museum ; the dates on these stelæ (in the Mayan chronology) can be deciphered but not the events recorded opposite to them. Nor has it yet been possible to correlate with any certainty the Mayan with the European chronology, and experts differ violently on this and consequently on the approximate periods during which the Maya civilisation flourished in different parts of Central America. However that may be, at some date still unknown, and for reasons which can only be guessed at, the Mayas abruptly deserted their old homes and moved in a body northwards into Yucatan, where they set up what has been called the New Empire. This new Empire was considerably weakened by internecine wars and the incursion of Mexican tribes and went down finally before the Spanish invasion in the sixteenth century. Why the Mayas should suddenly have left their homes in British Honduras (and other parts of Central America) and migrated to Yucatan will probably never be known. Various suggestions have been made : the outbreak of an epidemic of malaria or some other disease, exhaustion of the soil or famine caused by the failure of the rains, an attack by enemies, or merely superstition. A few of the weaker and less adventurous spirits no doubt remained behind and these are probably the ancestors of the Mayas in British Honduras today. The largest and best known remains of Maya architecture in the colony are those at Lubaantun, but these are now almost entirely concealed by dense jungle which has grown over them again since they were last cleared and studied by a British Museum expedition in 1927. The most accessible are the ruins of a building on the top of a hill near Benque Viejo on the western

frontier. Throughout the colony finds are made from time to time of buried Maya houses, pottery, flint implements, obsidian knives, jade ornaments, and figurines and face-masks of stone or clay ; there are large collections of these in many museums in Europe and America, and a small but interesting collection in Belize. One of the best-known writers on the Maya civilisation was the late Dr. T. Gamu, at one time a Medical Officer in British Honduras.

Some of the Mayas in the colony are refugees from Guatemala desirous of avoiding military service and the exactions of Guatemalan officials. Such were the founders of the village of San Antonio, who moved from San Luis, Guatemala, in 1883. From the beginning of their migration things went wrong with them and there was much sickness, and they came to the conclusion that the saints who had protected them in their old home had lost interest in them since they left. It was therefore decided that the statues in the church at San Luis should be brought to San Antonio ; moving secretly through the forty-five miles of forest that separated them from their objective, the men of San Antonio raided San Luis in the dead of night, broke into the church and bore off triumphantly to San Antonio the statues which may still be seen in the church there. Realising that the men of San Luis would certainly retaliate, the Alcalde of San Antonio wrote to the Governor stating that "for some unknown reason" they were in danger of attack, and some old rifles, with lead to make bullets, were sent to them. When the attack came later the men of San Antonio were away from the village but the women held off the attack until they returned ; the San Luis men were captured but subsequently released after they had promised not to attack San Antonio again.

That the Governor of the colony did not know the real cause of the impending attack on San Antonio shows how little was known of the interior of British Honduras at a comparatively late date. In view of the absence of roads, to which I have referred above, this is not surprising. San Antonio is no more than twenty-one miles from the coast, but when I visited it for the first time I had to ride there, for a great part of the way through a terrible swamp where the water was often three feet deep and my horse's hoofs sank deep into the mud. During my administration a motor road was built

to San Antonio and I had the satisfaction of driving along it the day before I finally left the colony.

The Alcalde of each of these Maya villages is elected by the people and confirmed in his appointment by the Governor. He has certain minor magisterial powers which he exercises without much regard for the law but generally to the satisfaction of the villagers. Some of the sentences imposed on wrongdoers are quaint. One visitor to a Maya village saw a man sitting alone on the top of a neighbouring hill, beating a drum from time to time to show that he was awake ; I am not sure what his offence had been, but his punishment was regarded as a severe one.

The Mayas are all Roman Catholics, in theory at any rate, and the Jesuit priests who run the mission in British Honduras have much influence over them. Accompanied by my wife I once paid an unexpected visit to a Maya village on the banks of the river ; as our launch approached the primitive landing stage the women, who wore nothing more than skirts, rushed away to their houses and returned with the breasts discreetly covered. When they found out that it was only the Governor, and not one of their priests, who was paying them a visit, many of them removed the hastily-donned upper garments.

The "black" Caribs who inhabit the southern part of the coast-line form another interesting section of the population. These people are the descendants of the true "red" Caribs of St. Vincent and other West Indian islands, and of escaped Negro slaves. For years this mixed race gave serious trouble to the authorities of St. Vincent, until they were finally deported *en masse* to Central America in 1797. Some remained where they had landed, on the shores of what is now the Republic of Honduras, but a large proportion moved northwards into British Honduras. The original home of the true Caribs was probably Guiana, and from there they attacked and conquered the Arawak inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles, killing the men and taking their women as wives ; this probably accounts for the fact that the Carib women to this day use a private language of their own, in addition to the Carib language, which the men are not allowed to learn. The Caribs of British Honduras are as black as

Negroes, but as a rule shorter and more stockily built. They handle their dories (canoes) with great skill, steering them when under sail with yoke-lines instead of a tiller ! The Carib women do most of the agricultural work. An interesting sidelight on racial prejudice is the fact that the Negroes look down on the Caribs, which is bitterly resented by the latter.

The Negroes, or Creoles, are nearly all the descendants of the original slaves, who worked in the forests with their masters and fought by their side against the Spaniards. They often have Scottish surnames and no doubt many of them have traces of Scottish blood in their veins. They speak a form of English known as "Creole," and are great orators. They are good workers on work they understand and like, such as forestry, but they have not the gift of perseverance and are inclined to blame others, and not their own shortcomings, for any lack of success. They have a great sense of humour and are very musical, and I was able to arrange for their bands to play every Sunday evening in the park at Belize; the music was good and the concerts well attended, and I was always glad to be there myself. In spite of the fact that they are easily misled by irresponsible agitators, they are in general a pleasant and reasonable people.

Not only were the agitators irresponsible, but they were also very ignorant and stupid. Their nightly vapourings on the "Battlefield," an open space in the town of Belize, contained very little except abuse. They used long words and catch phrases of which they seldom understood the meaning and reports of some of their speeches used to give me much amusement. On one occasion, speaking in the Legislative Council with reference to the lack of cleanliness in the town, I said that whatever other virtues the people of Belize might possess they lacked civic pride ; this statement was much resented, and one Battlefield orator declared that I did not know what I was talking about as there were more prostitutes in London than in Belize. The significance of this argument has eluded me.

I think that I am justified in saying that the majority of the people in the colony approved of my administration, or at least gave me credit for good intentions. One of the newspapers was most

generous in its praise, but the other never failed, on general principles, to attack the Government, and allowed its columns to be used regularly for offensive attacks on me and other officials by the same type of irresponsible (and scarcely literate) persons who orated on the Battlefield. These attacks did me no harm, and may indeed have done me good by winning for me the support of decent people who might otherwise have been lukewarm ; they certainly amused me more than they annoyed me. I knew well, all the time, who was behind the newspaper (financially and otherwise) and who prompted the articles which he was afraid to write himself.

But if these newspaper articles caused me no distress I am not so sure that their effect on other officials was not unfortunate, particularly on those officials who were natives of the colony. There are some men who are too thin-skinned for public life, and some officials who feel too greatly the unfair attacks of the worse type of colonial newspapers, which are not bound by the ordinary rules of decency and editorial responsibility. The Recommendations of the West India Royal Commission of 1938-39 contained the following :

"In view of the very important and growing influence which many organs of the Press in the West Indies now exercise in the relations between the public and the Civil Service, and on the important questions of colour prejudice and colour discrimination, we consider it most important that the value of restraint and moderation should be fully appreciated by those responsible for the conduct and tone of the Press."*

The Commission which reported on the Trinidad disturbances of 1937 also urged upon editors "the necessity for proper moderation of expression."[†] I have known no colony where this advice is not needed. The real trouble is that the ordinary semi-literate reader of the colonial newspapers of the type to which I refer (they are not all of this type) enjoys nothing so much as abuse of his betters, which flatters his inferiority complex ; unfortunately the editors, from at least some of whom a higher standard might be expected, cater for this unhappy appetite.

* Cmd. 6174, p. 28.

† Cmd. 5647, p. 57.

One of the incidents which gave me the greatest joy during my years in British Honduras was the abortive attempt to get up a petition for my removal. The Chairman of the Belize Town Board, who was a friend of mine, came to me in great distress one day to warn me that some of the Battlefield agitators were trying to obtain signatures to a petition to the Secretary of State praying for my transfer from the colony. I told my informant that I was very pleased to hear this, which considerably surprised him, and he endeavoured to impress on me the reality and the seriousness of the matter. Finally I told him that he might inform those concerned that I should be very pleased to forward this petition to the Secretary of State with my strong recommendation, that I doubted whether it would be proper for me to sign it myself, but that my wife would be glad to do so if the organisers would send her a copy. He was at first reluctant to take any such message, but consented when I assured him that I really wanted him to do so, and he departed on his errand shaking his head sadly and obviously in grave doubts as to my sanity. I understand that he did deliver my message and that the organisers of the petition, puzzled by my attitude and suspecting some sinister trick on my part, discontinued their efforts; in any case the petition was never forwarded. I wrote (demi-officially) to the Colonial Office to ask whether I would be justified in signing a petition asking for my removal, but I do not think that I ever received a written reply to this enquiry. The Colonial Office, bound by precedent, would be at a loss in this novel situation.

One of the bad habits of the British Honduras people is the smoking of ganja (Indian Hemp), which persists in spite of legislation and the strongest police measures against it. The regular smokers generally go mad after a while, and many of those in the mental hospital at Belize are there as a result of taking this drug.

Another fault, or misfortune, is the belief in obeah, a form of sorcery descended from the magic of Africa. The obeah man, or woman, has considerable powers throughout the West Indies, and is very much feared, not only by the poorer Negroes but even by some of the white people, although most of these and of the better-educated Negroes would scornfully disclaim any faith in or fear of obeah. Much of the obeah man's power is based on the fear he

causes, but there is no doubt that in some cases he uses poison on behalf of his clients—at a price ; more often his stock-in-trade consists of a few feathers and old bones. I remember that in St. Kitts, many years ago, one of the coloured members of the Legislative Council refused to sit in his place because a black pin had been stuck in the table opposite his seat. In British Honduras a white woman refused to pass through her garden gate because a few feathers had been placed on the latch. In the same colony I entered my office one morning to find my police orderly staring in horror at my chair, in the seat of which some feathers and broken sticks, with some earth, had been placed ; he was too frightened to remove them himself, and was genuinely anxious that I should not disturb them. I am sure that he expected something horrible to happen to me when I threw them on the floor. Later he assured me that they had been placed there by my cook, who was reputed to be an obeah woman, to influence me against dismissing her as I had threatened to do ; she was apparently as incompetent at obeah as she was at cooking. The fear of the supernatural, whether spoken of as obeah, juju, spirits,* or witches, is a very real factor in the lives of the people in Africa and the West Indies. What may seem ridiculous to us, after many generations of education, is not by any means ridiculous to these people. It is a terrible affliction and handicap to them.

The only escape from the tyranny of this fear is through the door of education. This must be a real and complete education, not merely the teaching of the illiterate to read and write, although this must be the basis. It must be an education based on the economy of the country, which in most of our colonies is almost entirely agricultural. It is not enough to build more schools and to give the children more book-learning. They must have good homes to go back to when they leave school in the afternoon, they must be taught to enjoy reading for its own sake and given the opportunity to read and to amuse themselves, they must be kept healthy by regular school inspections by doctors and dentists, and they must be given enough to eat. I insisted that the poor children of British Honduras should be given a meal in school during the day, on the grounds that it was impossible to put learning into the head of a child unless food

* See p. 95.

had first been placed in another part of its anatomy ; many of the children in these schools came from families subsisting barely above the starvation level, and were unfit to study until they had had a square meal. One had only to look at their eyes when food was given to them to realise how much it meant to these half-starved children. One Christmas we had a hundred of the poorest boys and girls from the Belize schools to a midday meal on the wide verandah of Government House ; they enjoyed their meal, but what was most touching was the request of some of them to take a part of the food before them to their parents and brothers and sisters at home. We were able to arrange for this without our guests having to stint themselves, but this incident, more than anything else, impressed me with the desperate need of the people.

I think a School Medical Service is of the utmost importance, and if the Service is to do its work thoroughly it must not be treated as a side-line to other duties. And the work done in the schools must be followed up by visits to the homes of the children. It is true that many of the children do not go to school, but most of them do and in the schools it is possible to give a more thorough examination than is possible at home. The people of the tropics are afflicted by innumerable diseases, and many of the adults have got to the stage when little can be done for them, but we have the opportunity in the schools to build up a healthy generation. I have seen children in schools whose eyesight was obviously defective, but nothing was done for them until I insisted that they should be seen by a doctor ; I have seen others who would have been saved from years of discomfort and suffering if they had been attended to by a dentist in good time.

Practically all the schools in British Honduras were run by religious bodies, with the financial assistance of the Government. I have referred in the previous chapter* to the valuable educational work done by the missions in West Africa, and their work in British Honduras was no less valuable. When considering education in the tropical colonies it is impossible to ignore the language difficulty. In Africa especially there is the burning question whether or not school work should be conducted in English or in the vernacular in

* See p. 114.

the lower classes. Most of the experts are for the vernacular and they may be right in thinking that a child will learn more in its early years if taught in a language which it understands. But most of the vernaculars of which I am thinking have no literature, the text books are few and not always satisfactory, and the teachers often cannot speak correctly the language of their pupils. Higher and even secondary education must be conducted in English, and in many parts of Africa the only possible means of communication between different tribes is the use of English. For these and other reasons* I believe that English should be as far as possible the medium of instruction.

Considering the small area and population, the language problem presented remarkable difficulties in British Honduras. I have heard German nuns trying to teach Maya children out of an English text book which they had to explain in Spanish, and I have wondered how much education the children were really receiving as a result of this. On one occasion an inspecting officer was visiting a school of Negro children in a small village. He asked a boy in one of the lowest classes to spell the word "cat," but the boy seemed unable to do so; so he turned to the schoolmaster in charge with the remark that it was disgraceful that a boy of that age should not be able to spell such a simple word. The schoolmaster indignantly replied that the boy *was* able to spell the word and suggested that he should himself ask the boy to spell it. When this was approved the schoolmaster turned to the boy and told him to spell "puss"; immediately came the reply "C-A-T."

I was able to arrange for scholarships from the elementary schools to the secondary schools run by the different missions; the scheme was a success in spite of the attempts to upset the equitable distribution of these scholarships among the different schools. In no colony that I have served in has religious feeling run so high as in British Honduras, and this I attribute very largely to the fact that denominational adherence followed very closely on the lines of racial cleavage. Generally speaking, the Mayas, Caribs, Mexicans and Guatemalans were Roman Catholics, and most of them spoke

* See p. 218 for the training of soldiers in the Royal West African Frontier Force to speak English.

Spanish while the priests were American Jesuits ; the British and the Negro creoles were Protestant, and spoke English. The Anglican cathedral had been built (in 1812) from public funds, but, in the absence of government assistance, except in respect of education, and the lack of adequate support from the impoverished people, the mission was scarcely able to support the establishment of clergy, churches and schools which had before been justified ; during my stay in the colony the Bishop of Honduras became Archbishop of the West Indies, and an Assistant Bishop of Honduras was appointed. For most of the time the Presbyterian Church was without a minister; the Methodists were more fortunate and ran a very good secondary school. The Baptist minister, who was the senior unofficial member of the Legislative Council when I arrived, served in British Honduras for a great many years. The Roman Catholic Mission was very largely supported by American contributions ; the priests were well-educated men and better preachers than most I have listened to in the colonies. The Bishop was an Irish-born American, a true Fenian at heart, with a bitter dislike for everything British which he made no attempt to conceal ; he told me on one occasion that he did not mind the children in his school singing the National Anthem as they did not understand it, but he himself would never soil his lips with it. I made real efforts to be friendly with the Bishop, not only because of his prominent position in a population more than half Catholic, but also because I am myself a Catholic ; I cannot honestly say that I was successful. His priests were most loyal to him, but I feel that they themselves realised his tactlessness. It may seem absurd, but apart from my objections to his anti-British attitude I resented very strongly his assumption that because I was British I was therefore a "heretic" at heart ; he caused me to understand why so many practising Christians should be anti-clerical.

So far as I know there is nothing in any other colony comparable to the Baron Bliss Trust in British Honduras. Mr. Edward Bliss was a wealthy English gentleman, one of whose ancestors had been a British general during the Peninsular War and had received the title of Baron from a grateful Portuguese government. Baron Bliss, as he called himself, had been an athlete in his youth, but when I first met him in the Bahamas in 1924 he had been an invalid and

unable to walk for some years. He had built himself a very comfortable yacht, of no great sea-going qualities, and he lived in her for years, generally at anchor in some safe port where he could indulge in fishing, his only recreation. He often spoke to me in the Bahamas of his intention to leave money to trustees for the payment of better salaries to officials in that colony, and for other purposes, his idea being that this money should not be under the control of the legislature, for which he had the greatest contempt. However, having quarrelled with some of the local people, he departed in search of a better colony, trying first Trinidad and then British Honduras. Soon after he arrived at Belize in 1926 he became seriously ill, made a hurried will, and died on his yacht without ever having landed. In this will he left all his money, subject only to a few small legacies and an annuity of £5,000 a year free of income tax to his widow, in trust for the benefit of British Honduras. The trustees appointed were the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, and the Attorney General of the colony, and neither the Secretary of State for the Colonies nor the local legislature can interfere with the discretion of the trustees. The Governor receives £300 a year, and the other two trustees £200 a year each, as remuneration from the Trust. The income of the Trust can be used only for capital expenditure, and may not be used for the building of schools (the Baron was no believer in education for the masses) except those for agricultural and vocational training. Sooner or later the courts will have to be asked to vary the Trust, because there must be a limit to the amount of capital expenditure that can reasonably be invested, with due regard to the ability of the community to maintain the amenities provided. But this limit will not be reached for many years as there is so much to be done in British Honduras, and because the legacy of the Baron has been considerably reduced by the demand for death duties from the Imperial Treasury. I believe that if the Baron had landed and died on shore he would have been held to have been domiciled in British Honduras, but as it was his domicile was considered to be in the United Kingdom, which was bad luck for the colony. He is buried near the sea-wall facing the harbour of Belize, but the lighthouse which he wished to have erected near his grave has not yet been built.

Every year, in accordance with directions given in the Baron's will, there is a regatta in the harbour, and sailing boats from all parts of the colony compete ; I used to take out a party in the Governor's yacht to watch the racing, and have often had to rescue the crews of boats that had upset ; as they were all good swimmers they were quite able to look after themselves until picked up, and they enjoyed a tot of whisky when they were hauled on board. Much more picturesque than the harbour regatta was the river regatta, which took place at a date near Christmas. Large flat-bottomed river boats, known as batteaux, with as many as forty paddlers each, and dories* of all sizes, competed in the races. The greasy pole and the race across the river of men sitting in large mahogany trays provided much amusement for a large and good-humoured crowd which lined both banks of the river and perched on every possible part of the bridge.

The Governor's yacht to which I referred above was named the *Patricia* and many a pleasant trip have my wife and I had in her. She had twin screws and could do about ten knots. About fifty-five feet over all, there was a cabin with two bunks for the passengers and accommodation for a crew of four. I seldom used the cabin except for dressing as it was more pleasant to sleep on deck in a camp-bed. She rolled a lot but was a safe vessel in a sea. I used the *Patricia* to visit the numerous settlements along the coast and up the navigable rivers, as well as the cayes that lay some miles out to sea. Occasionally we would go aground entering or leaving a river, owing to the shallow bars at the mouth of most of them, but the coxswain was a careful and reliable seaman and we always felt safe when he was in charge. He was never very happy when my wife and I went over the side in the mornings for a swim, as he believed that we ran a great risk from sharks ; when I pointed out to him that the risk was ours and that he had nothing to worry about he did not agree and reminded me that he would have to explain matters if he returned from a cruise minus the Governor.

There was good fishing to be had in the rivers and at sea. I am no fisherman, but I actually caught tarpon in the Belize river. Whenever the *Patricia* was at sea we towed a line astern and many baracuda

* Canoes.

and other fish were caught, amid great excitement of passengers and crew. When we were near a reef and we wanted lobster for lunch a member of the crew would scull the dinghy to the reef and return in a few minutes with one he had caught with his hands. At Half Moon Caye, some fifty miles from Belize, there is a bird sanctuary where the rare red-footed booby is preserved. The trees at one end of the caye are covered with nests containing the fluffy little white powder-puffs which are the young boobies. The parent birds fly over fifty miles each day to their feeding grounds and are frequently robbed of the fish they are bringing for their young ones by frigate-birds, just before they reach the caye. I have seen a frigate-bird dive towards a booby, which in its fright dropped the fish it was carrying in its beak ; before the fish reached the water the frigate-bird had got it.

One of the most interesting enterprises in the colony was the cultivation of sponges (as in the Bahamas). A living sponge is hooked up from the sea bottom and placed in the well of a boat where it is cut up into eight or ten sections. Each section is then fastened to a small concrete disc, about the size of a cheese plate, by means of a piece of wire or a bamboo "pin," and the disc is then dropped on to the sea bed, in sheltered water five or six feet deep. The cayes of Turneffe, which lie off the coast opposite Belize, provide ideally sheltered waters for the growing of sponges. About eighteen or twenty-four months after the sponge has been "planted" on its disc it is of marketable size ; it is then hooked up, cleaned, dried, and packed under pressure. It is remarkable that the sponge, which is a living animal,* can be divided and sub-divided, and that each sub-division will live and grow into a full-sized sponge. As each of the discs used in the planting of the sponges is marked with a number, it is possible to breed sponges from selected stock, and experiments along these lines have been very successful. Unfortunately, both in the Bahamas and British Honduras, a strange disease appeared a few years ago which attacked both the "wild" and cultivated sponges and set back the industry very seriously.

There are many dangerous snakes in the British Honduras forests, and alligators in all the rivers ; I have seen manatee in one of the

* See p. 81.

lagoons. The tapir, locally known as the mountain-cow, does much damage on farms ; one of them was kept for some years as a pet in Belize, and was quite tame, but had to be got rid of when it went into its owner's house and ate most of his clothes ! Another tapir was run into by a train on the Stann Creek railway, with fatal results both to train and tapir. Deer and wild pigs abound in the forests, but the most popular meat for the table is that of the gibbon, which is not unlike a large guinea-pig.

In 1937, as soon as the local Coronation festivities were over, I went to England on leave with my wife, travelling on a Hamburg-Amerika steamer ; it was a most interesting voyage. We called at Puerto Barrios (Guatemala) ; Port Limon (Costa Rica) ; Colon, where we had the opportunity of seeing the Gatun locks and other parts of the Panama Canal through the courtesy of the Governor of the Canal Zone ; Cartagena, where the taxi-driver spoke of "Senor Drake" as though he had attacked the city only the week before ; Curacao ; Puerto Cabello and La Guayra, from where we drove over the mountains to Caracas. We stopped at Port-of-Spain where the Governor of Trinidad and Lady Fletcher invited us to luncheon at Government House, and we had breakfast next morning at Government House, Barbados, with Sir Mark and Lady Young. Again in 1939 I went on leave via Jamaica, where I stayed for a few days with the Governor and Lady Richards at King's House. Sir Arthur Richards* was later Governor of Nigeria, and we met frequently as members of the West African War Council, at which he was a tower of strength—and humour. In a later chapter† I describe how my leave in 1939 was cut short by the imminence of war.

In 1936 I was appointed a Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George. I have often thought that it would be wiser if the Secretary of State were to recommend to His Majesty that this Honour should be awarded to the Governor of even a small colony before he assumes office, or at any rate at the first opportunity thereafter. Surprise is always expressed when each successive occasion on which such an Honour

* Now Lord Milverton.

† See p. 255.

could be received (New Year and the King's Birthday) passes without the Governor being awarded what is generally regarded as a routine Honour, and this gives rise to speculation and affords the opportunity to agitators to ascribe the withholding of the Honour to Colonial Office dissatisfaction with the Governor's activities.

During my time in British Honduras relations with the neighbouring republics were not very friendly on the official plane, although I was on excellent terms with the Governor of the Mexican State of Quintana Roo and with the Consuls of the other republics. When I first reached the colony there was much trouble on our northern frontier from raids by Mexican Indians; I wrote personally to General Melgar, the Governor of Quintana Roo, and the raids ceased. I paid several visits to the General at his headquarters, the town of Chetumal, which is only a few miles from the town of Corozal in the north of British Honduras, and am glad of this opportunity to pay tribute to his hospitality. On one occasion, when my wife and I were dining with him, he asked whether we would care to dance, and when we said we would a bell was rung to summon all the inhabitants to a dance on the plaza; a band turned up and chairs for the Governor's party were produced from somewhere. It was a very democratic dance, persons from all walks of life joining in, but I noticed that there were no Negroes. When I enquired whether they were not allowed to come to these dances I was assured that there was nothing to stop them from coming, but I discovered later that if they had come they would probably have been arrested on a charge of obstruction or disorderly conduct, so they prudently stayed away. As the country was professedly communist at that time this was rather surprising. So communist was it that General Melgar apologised, when he came to stay with me, for not wearing a dinner jacket in the evening; this bourgeois garment had been banned by the President. The breaking off of diplomatic relations with Mexico, on account of its Government's treatment of British mining interests, did not, fortunately, affect my friendly relations with General Melgar, a friendship which I feel was of some benefit to our two countries.

I was less fortunate as regards Guatemala. The President of that republic, General Ubico, was a very able man, who although some-

thing of a dictator had done a great deal for his country by the stamping out of graft and the improvement of communications. He had, unfortunately, made up his mind that British Honduras really belonged to Guatemala, a revival of the old Spanish claim which the settlers maintained they had dealt with finally at the battle of St. George's Caye in 1798. A Boundary Convention with Guatemala in 1859 had recognised the British claim to the colony, in return for which the British Government undertook to construct a road from near Belize to Guatemala ; later an offer was made to pay a definite sum of money in lieu of building a road, which was not then so necessary in view of the completion of a railway from the sea to Guatemala City, but this was not accepted and nothing more was done. A few years before I went to British Honduras the Guatemalan government agreed to a boundary survey, and a joint survey was duly made, but at the last moment President Ubico refused to agree to any boundary convention and laid claim to a large part of the colony. Soon after I arrived I had to despatch a party of armed police to eject from a village on the British side of the frontier a detachment of Guatemalan soldiers who had occupied it ; the soldiers retired before the police arrived, and I believe this intrusion was no more than a "try on" to see whether the British authorities would act. The argument dragged on in an unsatisfactory manner, and the Guatemalan government closed the land frontier to trade ; by so doing they prevented the mahogany and chicle produced in the Peten district of Guatemala from passing through British Honduras to the sea, the only practicable route to the world's markets, and at one time all the chicle produced there was being flown by aeroplane to a Guatemalan port. To his credit be it said that President Ubico announced in 1940 that he would drop the question of the ownership of British Honduras for the time being, so as not to embarrass the British Government at a critical stage of the war. I feel certain that with a man of this sort some reasonable compromise could have been arrived at if the matter could have been discussed in a friendly way as between Guatemala and British Honduras, to which the President had no hostility. However, the Foreign Office officials, in their wisdom, preferred not to allow the Governor of British Honduras to meet the President. I might not

have been successful, but then neither was the Foreign Office. I cannot resist adding that when I was in England on leave in 1937, having then been in British Honduras for more than two years, and, I trust, learnt a little about the colony and the boundary dispute with Guatemala, I was invited to a conference on the subject at the Colonial Office ; there I had to listen, for well over an hour, to a long dissertation from a Foreign Office official on the history of the subject, and, as a last straw, on the conditions in British Honduras which he had never visited. I feel that my leave could more usefully have been employed, but the official in question no doubt enjoyed giving me the benefit of the vast knowledge he had acquired in the Foreign Office.

As the result of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the gift of a suitable building by Mr. R. S. Turton of Belize, I was able to start a good library and museum in the colony. My experience in starting the Lagos Library was of great help and the books were a real blessing to the community ; books from the library at Belize were sent at regular intervals to the smaller towns of the colony. Some good maps and Medici reproductions of famous pictures were hung on the walls and the library was furnished with British Honduras mahogany of excellent quality. The museum section contained a good collection of Maya remains and plaster casts of some of the stelæ originally found in the colony and removed to the British Museum. The British Museum also presented reproductions of Greek statues and other objects of interest, and for a small colony the collection was a good one. I must confess that I found greater interest in the organising of this library and museum than I did in the general administration of the colony,* and it may well be that the foundation of this institution will prove of greater benefit to British Honduras than any of my normal administrative actions. Apart from the direct educational value of the books and museum specimens the library was a model in a town which needed a good example of cleanliness and good order ; the firm enforcement of the simple rules of the library prevented the loss of books and afforded another example.

* Sir Ronald Storrs had the same feeling in respect of a museum in Cyprus ; see *Orientalism*, p. 112.

I have always thought that in British colonies not enough is done to improve the amenities available, and to show the people, by example, what can be done if the trouble is taken to do it. We see that the people have their bread but too often forget to let them have some butter with it, and they certainly never get any jam. We give them hospitals and schools, but seldom libraries and picture galleries. We build roads but seldom provide parks or gardens. I realise that money is scarce, and that there are many urgently needed improvements, but I do not believe that the priorities we give these things are always the right ones. British Honduras had few enough amenities of any kind, yet I had a long struggle with the British Treasury before I could obtain sanction for the small annual grant (about £400 a year) from British Honduras funds to maintain the library and museum, the capital cost of which had been met entirely from non-government funds. Again, in Nigeria money could not be found to maintain the excellent botanical gardens started by the Germans in Victoria, before we captured the Cameroons, and the gardens at Ebute Metta, near Lagos, had been abandoned before I went there in 1912. In French and Belgian colonies there are pleasant public gardens in every town, and some trouble has obviously been taken to beautify the streets : British colonial towns suffer by comparison.

Government House in Belize is an ugly, square building, which dates from 1814. There is a magnificent mahogany staircase, but in a country which produces the best mahogany in the world much of the house is built of Norwegian pine. When we arrived in the colony Government House still showed the effects of the hurricane of three years earlier. The house is raised about eight feet from the ground, on concrete pillars, but the tidal wave which accompanied the hurricane had covered the ground floor and ruined much of the furniture, which had not been replaced on account of the state of the colony's finances. Upstairs, some of the furniture consisted of packing cases covered with chintz ! In the cupboards of my office there still remained some of the mud deposited there by the tidal wave. A general clean up, and some new furniture, improved the appearance of the building. I feel very strongly that in every colony, and in the interests of that colony itself, Government House should

be maintained in such a way as to be a credit and not a disgrace. The Governor has frequently to entertain distinguished visitors who cannot help judging the colony by what they see of the Governor's residence. I know that some Governors have overdone things and spent too much public money on Government House, but there are others who have been over-conscientious in this matter, to the detriment of the colony's reputation and the discomfort of their successors.

It was not only Government House that needed a clean-up when I arrived in Belize. Public buildings were deteriorating badly owing to the false economy of postponing repairs and repainting. The offices were dirty and some of the officers themselves were untidy in appearance and improperly dressed. There was an atmosphere of slackness and inefficiency of which I received a first impression by the fact that the Guard of Honour, which should have received me when I landed, was late in arriving at the wharf. At my first meeting of the Legislative Council I was also kept waiting for some time as several of the members were late. Incidents of this kind did not occur a second time.

I do not think that I attach too much importance to these things. A lack of punctuality, untidy offices, and slovenliness in dress, may be indications of eccentric genius, but they are more likely to be signs of inefficiency. In a tropical country, where the effects of the climate on generations of their ancestors have made the inhabitants slack and casual, and weakened their physical and moral fibres, it is, in my view, essential for officials to set a high example of punctuality, cleanliness, and other outward appearances of efficiency. The education that these things give is just as important to the people's future as the book-learning they receive in the schools. The response to a high standard set may be scarcely visible, but it will come—slowly; a bad example will be followed with disastrous speed. Much of the backwardness of the tropics comes, in Kipling's words :

“All along o' nastiness, all along o' mess,

All along o' doin' things rather-more-or-less.”

It is up to British officials to set a higher standard.

British Honduras did not even enjoy the amenity of comparative

freedom from insect pests. Even in the Niger delta I have never met so many biting insects as in Central America. Mosquitoes and sandflies were everywhere, and in the evenings ladies sat with their feet in bags like pillow-cases to escape the bites. The Belize golf course had more than 100 holes, all but nine of them made by crabs, and the roughness of the "fairway" took much of the pleasure out of golf; what pleasure was left soon disappeared when players were bitten by the small red ticks which abounded in the grass. To walk on the grass by the side of the road, or to ride through the forest and brush against the branch of a tree, meant that one would soon be mercilessly bitten by ticks great or small. Unlovely beasts known as beef-worms would sometimes hatch out below the skin. In fact British Honduras was just one continual itch and scratch.

On the other hand, Belize was much cooler than any other tropical town in which I have lived, and this I attribute to the fact that it is built on a windward coast, and that it receives the full benefit of the regular trade-winds. The Bahamas in the winter are not much cooler than Belize, and in the summer months are much warmer, as they are too far north to get the trade-winds. In most of the West Indian islands the chief town is on the leeward side, an advantage in sailing ship days when they were built; fortunately for British Honduras there is no leeward coast.

When there is a "norther" in the winter months Belize can be very cold indeed, and the houses are not built to meet these occasional cold spells. The "northers" also make it extremely unpleasant and even dangerous for small craft plying along the coast and between the cayes, as the wind whips up an angry sea very quickly in these narrow waters.

But allowing for all its drawbacks and lack of amenities, I liked British Honduras and was very sorry indeed when I had to leave it and the many friends I made there. And I think that most of the people were sorry when I left. With their usual generosity of mind they overlooked the shortcomings of my administration and gave me a wonderful send-off. In my farewell speech, at a large dance given in my honour before I left, I used the following words: "You know as well as I do that I have made mistakes, having not yet acquired the mantle of infallibility that I shall no doubt assume when I

become a member of the Colonial Office staff, and it is good of you to overlook these mistakes. Let me say that no Governor could have wished for a pleasanter people to deal with, and that no Governor could have hoped for a more generous appreciation of his efforts than I have received from the people of this colony."

I meant what I said.

CHAPTER VII

THE COLONIAL OFFICE

IN OCTOBER, 1939, only a few weeks after I had returned to British Honduras from leave in England, I was offered the appointment of Assistant Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. Another serving Governor, Sir Henry Moore, had been filling this post for two years, but he was now proceeding to take up the Governorship of Kenya, and it was necessary to relieve him. The salary of the post offered me, £1,700 a year* less British income tax (which a Governor does not pay unless he has a residence in the United Kingdom) represented a serious reduction on the salary I was then drawing as Governor of British Honduras and would be still less than the salary of the more important governorship to which I could reasonably expect appointment after five years' service in British Honduras. I had, however, taken great interest in the enquiry into West Indian conditions conducted by the Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Moyne, in 1938-39, and had given evidence and made recommendations to the Commission when it visited British Honduras. I thought that I might be able to do some useful work towards implementing the recommendations of this Commission, and I was in any case a firm believer in the interchange of staff between the Colonial Office and the Colonial Service. In these circumstances I decided to accept the offer and assumed duty in the Colonial Office in the first week of January, 1940.

The Colonial Office laboured then, and to some extent still labours, under three major handicaps : (a) it was scattered about London in such a way that its right hand never knew what its left hand was doing ; (b) the Secretary of State was changed too frequently and had too much to do, and (c) the organisation of the office was such that expeditious working was very difficult. Another former handicap, which has been removed in late years, was the fact that many of the Colonial Office officials had no experience of the colonies.

* Increased later to £2,200 a year.

The first handicap was the least important, but it seriously affected efficiency. The main office was in Downing Street, and was shared with the Dominions Office* (which also shared some of the staff); it was much too small for the number of persons working there, and branch offices had to be housed elsewhere in London, in temporary accommodation which for one reason or another was often changed. At various times I have known a part of the Colonial Office staff accommodated, among other places, in offices in Victoria Street, Pall Mall, Bridge Street, and Park Street, Mayfair; the last-named offices were luxurious, being in a block of flats temporarily taken over, and each senior officer had a private bathroom attached to his office, an advantage during the war when fuel was scarce! Action on various matters was held up while the papers on the subject passed from office to office across London; time was wasted by men going from one building to another for meetings and discussions; colonial officials temporarily in England were bewildered by the difficulty of finding out in which building a particular branch of the Colonial Office was housed. The need for a central office large enough to accommodate all of the Colonial Office staff had long been realised, but nothing definite was done about it until 1946, when it was announced that a new Colonial Office would be built on the site of the old Westminster Hospital, one of the finest sites in London. In the meantime the Colonial Office has been moved from Downing Street to Church House, in Great Smith Street, but even now there are still many branches of the Office scattered about London.

It is to be hoped that when the new building is erected it will be worthy of its site and of the colonial empire. It should provide not only accommodation for the Colonial Office staff, but also for those numerous official and demi-official organisations connected with the colonies. It should also provide office accommodation for Governors and other senior colonial officials who frequently have to do a great deal of work and interview numerous people on official business during their leave. Comfortable waiting rooms or some form of club or restaurant should also be provided for the use of the Colonial Office staff and visiting colonial officials.

The importance of this amenity can hardly be exaggerated. There

* Now the Commonwealth Relations Office.

are numerous colonial officials who have told me that they have never been to the Colonial Office or met one of the staff of that Office. There are others who have been once, and, discouraged by their reception, have never been back. It is a mistake to think that the Colonial Office men do not want to meet their colleagues from the colonies, but they are generally very busy, and a number of interviews can delay work, and break the continuity of thought, to an alarming degree.* Most of the interviews are sought with a view to raising personal issues, of little importance in themselves, but desperately important to the officer concerned, whose sense of proportion is quite naturally not to be depended upon in such circumstances; he will bitterly resent an apparent lack of interest in his case. The solution lies in providing additional Colonial Office staff to deal with these interviews, and a common meeting ground for officials from the colonies and those from the Colonial Office. So great was the congestion in the old Colonial office that the waiting rooms in which visitors were expected to remain until their turn came for an interview were no more than draughty boxes in the corridors, or cupboards under the stairs.†

When I first joined the Colonial Office I had an excellent room on the second floor, facing Downing Street, but the bomb which destroyed the Treasury in 1940 broke all my windows, and I moved to another office on the top floor. This was bright and sunny but when the lift was out of action as a result of enemy attack, or, more often, from sheer old age, it was a weary business going up and down the endless stairs.

The second handicap to which I referred above, the frequent changes in the persons filling the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies,‡ is a recognised evil. In the short time that I served in the Colonial Office there were three Secretaries of State, Mr.

* The position is much the same at the Secretariat and other offices at colonial headquarters when officers from the districts call there.

† In 1840, Charles Buller, in his *Responsible Government for Colonies*, wrote of the waiting rooms then in use at the Colonial Office as being provided with "old and meagre furniture, bookcases crammed with colonial gazettes and newspapers, tables covered with baize, and some old and crazy chairs scattered about."

‡ The Secretary of State for the Colonies is often spoken of, in England, as the Colonial Secretary, a title which to people in the colonies is apt to be misleading. In a colony the Colonial Secretary is the head of the Secretariat, and the Governor's chief adviser.

Malcolm MacDonald, Lord Lloyd, and Lord Moyne. From 1905, when I joined the Colonial Service, to 1947, there have been no less than 23. Of these, two* held the office for about four and a half years each, and one† for about three and a half years. Three men have therefore filled the post for 12 out of these 42 years, leaving for the other 20 only 30 years, an average of about 18 months for each !‡

These frequent changes seriously interfere with the progress of the colonies and few Secretaries of State have had the time to learn about the colonial empire before they leave office. Why the Colonial Office should be regarded as unimportant, and no more than a stepping-stone to higher ministerial appointments, I do not know. There are sixty millions of people in the colonies, and the work to be done is of the highest importance and interest, calling for a profound knowledge of human nature and administrative capacity of a high degree. It is a post which should be filled by one of the best men in the Cabinet. Joseph Chamberlain was Secretary of State for the Colonies for over eight years (1895-1903), and he goes down to history as one of the greatest.§ Winston Churchill held the post for twenty months (1921-1922) and was Parliamentary Under Secretary from 1905 to 1908.

It is seldom that Secretaries of State have visited the colonies during their term of office, or that they have known anything at first hand about them before they took up their duties. In practice it was quite impossible for a Secretary of State to visit many colonies until air travel cut down the time which had to be spent on voyages, but in the future it is to be hoped that the Secretary of State will visit at least all of the more important colonies. Colonel Stanley and Mr. Creech Jones have set a good example in this matter. These visits are greatly appreciated by the people of the colonies and afford governors valuable opportunities for discussions on the spot with the man who can authorise action. The benefit to the Secretary of

* Viscount Harcourt (1910-15) and Mr. L. S. Amery (1924-29).

† Viscount Swinton (1931-35).

‡ This is nothing new. There were eight Secretaries of State between 1827 and 1835.

§ Lord Elton says that until Chamberlain became Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1895 it was regarded as a secondary post, and had "usually been derided, when not forgotten." See *Imperial Commonwealth*, p. 396.

State himself is obvious. I shall refer later to the impossibility of the Secretary of State being able to cope with the amount of work he is now required to do.

I will also refer later to the third of the handicaps referred to above, and mention first a former handicap which no longer exists except to a very small degree. In the past it is true that many of the Colonial Office officials had never seen a colony and few indeed had ever spent any considerable time in one, but in recent years there has been a very notable improvement in this respect. The principle has been accepted that members of the Colonial Office staff should serve for a period in one or another colony, and that senior members should pay frequent visits to the colonies with whose affairs they are dealing.

In my view each Colonial Office official should be required to visit all the colonies which fall within his geographical "schedule," and to visit them frequently. A visit once or twice in the official lifetime of a man is not sufficient, and, in fact, is more dangerous than no visits at all, as colonial conditions change rapidly, and out-of-date knowledge is worse than ignorance. To permit of these visits the establishment of the Colonial Office would have to be increased, but by the use of air transport the visits need not take very long.

To require members of the Colonial Office staff to serve in the colonies is even better than flying visits, but here again care must be taken to bring the official's knowledge up-to-date from time to time by means of visits, to avoid the menace of the "expert" who is thinking in terms of long past days.*

Visits by Colonial Office officials to the colonies would also help them to a more realistic outlook on the facts of life. I remember with some amusement the horrified reaction of one such visiting official to the blunt speaking of a local Civil Servant on matters affecting the Service. He regarded this quite inoffensive officer as a dangerous agitator. The fact is that the visitor had never heard, in his sheltered life in the Colonial Office, the forthright speech of a man accustomed to deal with men rather than with papers; and in

* For the same reason I am against the suggestion that has been made in the past, that the Secretary of State should be assisted by a panel of ex-Governors.

the papers with which he dealt he had come across nothing more violent than the "humble prayer" of a petitioner, or the formal courtesies of an official despatch.

I believe that the real solution is to staff the Colonial Office in the same way, and with the same men, as the Colonial Civil Service is staffed. At present the Colonial Office (Administrative Class)* staff is part of the Home Civil Service, men who have passed a difficult examination with a view to entering the Civil Service in one department or another. The Colonial Service, on the other hand, is generally recruited by selection and although in the ordinary way a university degree is required of a candidate for the principal branches of the Service there is no competitive examination. I should like to see the Colonial Civil Service used, not only to fill posts in the colonies but also in the Colonial Office, on the same lines as the Foreign Service and the staff of the Foreign Office have recently been fused.† There will, of course, be difficulties, more especially with regard to the confidential reports and personal files of officers, and the question of promotion, but these difficulties could be overcome. The gain to the colonies would be immense. Business at the centre would be in the hands of men who knew the colonies, and the staff in the colonies would be invigorated from time to time by men who had served at headquarters and from that position had gained a wider appreciation of general problems. The men at headquarters would realise that public opinion in the colonies on colonial affairs was at least as important as the goodwill of a member of Parliament; officers in the colonies would understand better why it is necessary to consider the views of Parliament and political parties.

It has been the practice for many years to employ in the Colonial Office members of the Colonial Administrative Service (and occasionally members of other Colonial Services), who are seconded for a year or two from the colonies to which they belong. (They are referred to in the Colonial Office as "beachcombers.") Before the war, also, a few of the younger men on the Colonial Office staff have been sent out to serve for a period in the colonies. But these

* Formerly known as the First Division.

† Sir Cosmo Parkinson, formerly Permanent Under Secretary in the Colonial Office, is against this proposal. See *The Colonial Office from Within*, pp. 99-100.

exchanges, desirable as they may be in lieu of something better, are not enough. The men concerned are a small minority in a strange environment, feeling that they are being watched with a critical eye by men of a different Service, and knowing that they will return before very long to the work and surroundings which they know better. Some men, for family reasons or on account of their health, like to be seconded for work in England, but I have known others who longed to escape from the dreary office work of the Colonial Office to their more interesting and active duties in the colonies.

An extension of this practice, which began with the appointment in 1937 of Sir Henry Moore as Assistant Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, was the attachment to the Colonial Office of a serving Governor. I succeeded Sir Henry Moore, and was myself succeeded in 1941 by Sir William Battershill. I am sorry that the practice was then discontinued (in 1945), as I am sure that it was a good one. The reason was, perhaps, that the Governors themselves were unable or unwilling to make the financial sacrifice involved. With only three exceptions, the cash emoluments of all colonial Governors exceed £2,200 a year, the salary formerly paid to a Governor seconded to the Colonial Office; Governors have, moreover, the use of a fully furnished house and pay no income tax on their emoluments. They have most of them incurred commitments, justified by the Governor's income which they felt able to count on until the time of retirement, and some of them are taking the opportunity (probably the first opportunity they have had since joining the Colonial Service) to save some money for the future. In the Colonial Office a large slice of their salary is deducted for income tax, and they have either to live in expensive furnished flats or houses, or spend considerable sums in setting up establishments which would have to be broken up again in a couple of years. I certainly found it extremely difficult.

When I joined the Colonial Office as Assistant Under Secretary of State I was responsible for the business of the Far East, the Pacific, and the West Indies Departments. I was fortunate in having as the heads of these departments excellent Assistant Secretaries, of great experience and ability, to whom I owe a real debt of gratitude. Throughout the period of my attachment to the Colonial Office

(and before and after it) I received from all the staff the greatest possible assistance and consideration. Like most people who have lived in the colonies, I have giped at the Colonial Office as an institution, and deplored its dilatory methods, but I have nothing but admiration for the ability, industry, and humanity of the individual members of the staff. It is the system, and not the men who serve it, that the Colonial Service and colonials generally complain about; of the ability and hard work of these men there can be no question. Nor of their humanity. The impression that the Colonial Office is a cold-blooded institution and that the staff take no interest in the people of the colonies or in members of the Colonial Service is entirely wrong.

As a matter of fact it is my opinion that the Colonial Office is too humane, too good an employer, for the efficiency of the Colonial Service. Granted that great care is taken in the selection of those appointed to the Service, it is nevertheless inevitable that mistakes should be made from time to time, and that a few men should be appointed who are lazy, or incompetent, or addicted to drink. Still more inevitable is it that some of those selected should deteriorate as they get older, either through an innate weakness of character or on account of unfortunate influences in the tropical colonies in which they serve. Some are merely unsuited to a colonial life, either through temperament or because of indifferent health. If these failures or misfits could be allowed to retire voluntarily (on such pension as they may have earned), or could easily be removed from the Service it would not matter, but once a man enters the Colonial Service it is almost impossible to get rid of him unless he is convicted of a criminal offence or makes such an exhibition of himself when under the influence of drink that it is impossible to overlook the matter. The Service as a whole is an exceedingly good one, and an extremely high proportion of its members are well-conducted, hard-working, efficient and conscientious public servants, but everyone in the Service (and a great many non-official colonials) can call to mind cases where inefficient officers have continued in the Service for years and years until they retired on account of age and with a pension. Everyone can remember officers (fortunately few) who were notorious for their intemperate habits, but continued to draw

their salaries because although they were never in full possession of their mental faculties they were never hopelessly drunk. Everyone knows of men promoted to senior posts who were quite unfitted for such appointments,* but continued to fill them for many years to the detriment of the Service and the discouragement of their junior officers. These are hard words but all of us who have served in the colonies know them to be true. That the Colonial Civil Service has carried on successfully in spite of this handicap is due to the ability, energy, and loyalty of the others. But the good work of the many is often overlooked, while the behaviour or inefficiency of the few failures gives to those unfriendly to the Colonial Service the opportunity to criticise it unfairly.

The cause of this deplorable state of affairs is to be found in the formalities needed before a civil servant can be removed from office, and the tendency of the Colonial Office always to find excuses for the culprit.† This is due very largely to an exaggerated sense of justice, which insists that every charge should be proved beyond the least possibility of doubt. I believe that all accused persons should be given the benefit of any reasonable doubt, but there is no reason to treat a man accused of inefficiency (which may be a misfortune rather than a fault) in the same way as one accused, in Court, of a serious crime. It is extremely difficult to prove inefficiency, but we all know it when we see it‡. It is also very difficult to produce conclusive evidence that a man has been drunk, or so much under the influence of drink as to have been incapable of performing his duties, but any man of the world can recognise the symptoms.§

* There have been several cases of men who have been removed from one colony on the strong recommendation of the Governor, on account of inefficiency or some other failing, and subsequently appointed to another colony, very often in spite of the protests of the Governor of the colony on which the officer has been "dumped." These unwanted "problem children" give much trouble to the Colonial Office—but more trouble to the colonies on which they are inflicted. It would be far better to give them a pension and let them go.

† "If the Colonial Office has erred in its dealings with colonial officers, it has erred in giving undue consideration to the individual." See *The Colonial Office from Within*, by Sir Cosmo Parkinson, formerly Permanent Under Secretary, p. 78.

‡ I realise that security of tenure in official posts is of the greatest importance if the high standards of the British Public Service are to be maintained, but I feel that the precautions taken against the unfair treatment of Public Officers are excessive.

§ When Dr. Johnson was asked "What is poetry?" he replied: "Why, sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all *know* what light is; but it is not easy to tell what it is."

It is the realisation of these difficulties which encourages the lazy man to continue in his laziness, and the hard drinker to go on drinking. And the sight of inefficiency unchecked in others tends to reduce the zeal of the better men, and to produce a cynical attitude to the Service which is bad for work and for morale. I am confident that a more robust and realistic policy in dealing with such cases would result in an immediate change for the better in the Colonial Civil Service. The better men, and I am glad to believe that they are in a very considerable majority, would rejoice, and here I should like to point out that a lenient attitude to drunkards and incompetents in the interests of "justice" is extremely unjust to the good men.

There are two changes which would, I think, produce better results. In the first place there should be a rule of the Service that officers will be retired on pension if within a certain period they do not get promotion, a rule similar to that of the Navy. This involves a change in the present system of promotion which today depends too much on fortuitous vacancies and too little on the merits of the officers. In the second place, it should be possible for an officer to be given a pension, even if a reduced one, in spite of the fact that he has been dismissed. Many an officer has not been dismissed, although on the merits of the case he should have been, because those who have to make the decision are reluctant to send a man with perhaps many years of service behind him out into the world without a penny of pension. I have known men who should have been dismissed for a certain specific cause to be "removed from the Service on grounds of general inefficiency" in order that they might receive the pension earned by many years of work ; technically quite wrong, but morally right. I have been guilty of this technical irregularity many times and have no qualms of conscience in this connection, but such irregularities should not have been made necessary by a bad law.

I do not think I am unfair in placing so large a share of the blame on the Colonial Office in these matters. I admit that too frequently Governors and Heads of Departments condone the offences of their subordinates, and perhaps do not take a strong enough line in insisting on the dismissal or removal of unsatisfactory officers, but I

maintain that the restrictions of the Colonial Regulations (for which the Colonial Office is responsible) and the known tendency of the Colonial Office to leniency, has had an unfortunate effect and encouraged the taking of the line of least resistance. The Governor who regards efficiency as essential to the Civil Service and presses for the removal of inefficient officers, and especially inefficient Heads of Department, is regarded as a nuisance, as indeed he is. Unless he is a very determined man he loses heart, or, worse still, begins to doubt whether efficiency and good work are really essential. But how can a Governor demand good work and a high standard of conduct from subordinate officers when it is common knowledge that a certain Head of Department is completely unfitted for the post he holds, or is seldom sober in the evenings? And what respect can the general public have for a Service where such a state of affairs can exist, as undoubtedly it does? I dislike having to say these things, but I have a great respect and affection for the Colonial Civil Service in which I have spent most of my life, and I should like to see this handicap on its efficiency removed.

For mistakes made in the selection of men for first appointment to the Service I have every sympathy; such mistakes are inevitable, and there are very few. But even in the case of men on probation it is remarkably difficult to remove the unsatisfactory officer. Men are appointed on probation for a period of two or three years, after which, if they pass the necessary examinations (in languages, etc.) and are otherwise satisfactory, they are confirmed in their appointments. It might be thought that an officer on probation would be required to satisfy his superiors that he was fit for confirmation, and in theory that is the case. But in practice the onus is on his superior officers to prove that he is not satisfactory and it is sometimes very difficult to convince the Colonial Office on this point. But surely the man on the spot, who sees the probationer at work and at play, sees him with his colleagues and with the natives of the country, and sees his reactions to the new kind of life to which he has to adapt himself, is in a better position to judge of his chances of turning into a good Civil Servant than those who can only judge of him by reading reports. Any experienced colonial official can tell fairly quickly whether the new arrival will prove a success or not although

he would probably find it difficult to explain how or why he formed his opinion.* I believe that a firmer attitude towards probationers would exclude from the Colonial Civil Service a large proportion of those who later turn out to be failures. It is far better to get rid of a man quickly if he is unlikely to prove a success than to keep him until he is too old to find his niche in some other walk of life—better for the Service and better for the individual concerned. It is no disgrace for a young man to be found unsuitable for life in a tropical colony, which demands good health and a placid temperament which not everyone is given.

Nor is it kind to the individual to keep him on in a Service where he can never hope for promotion, or where he has already been passed over as unfit for promotion. It would be far better for the man, and obviously better for the Service, if such misfits could be pensioned off at an age when they are still young enough to obtain other employment. Under the former West African Pensions law an officer could not retire (with a pension) until he attained the age of fifty (in some colonies the retirement age is sixty), or unless he was invalided out of the Service. So the Service continued to retain a number of men between forty and fifty years of age, who had been passed over and saw no further hope of advancement, who were embittered by a sense of failure and possibly of injustice, and were sometimes inclined to get their own back by doing as little work as they possibly could; if such men could have been granted the pensions they had already earned they might have found in another country a job of which they could have made a success, and relieved the colony of a man with a grievance, the most dangerous handicap to the efficiency of the Civil Service.

These proposals would involve drastic changes in the conditions of service of Colonial officials, in the pensions laws, and in the Colonial Regulations, and a still more drastic change in the spirit in which they are worked. The Colonial Regulations were first drawn up in 1837 for the guidance of Governors and other officers in the colonies which existed at that time, and although they have been

* See the last footnote at p. 163.

amended frequently they still preserve the main principles which were no doubt necessary when Governors and subordinate officials owed their positions to a system of patronage which happily no longer exists. In their present form they have been regarded by some as sacrosanct. In 1940, when it was found necessary to cut to a minimum returns and other correspondence which took up too much of the time of colonial officials, I was appointed to a Colonial Office committee which was charged with the duty of recommending what returns, etc., could be suspended for the rest of the war. I remember suggesting the suspension of one particular return and being told that this could not be done as the return in question was called for by Colonial Regulations; as these Regulations are made (and amended) by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and not by the Deity, I pointed out that the difficulty was not insuperable.

The same committee recommended the relaxation of other Colonial Regulations, and particularly the limits, under one Regulation, to the Governor's authority to sanction supplementary expenditure. There is perhaps a case for limiting a Governor's powers in this respect (although I doubt it) but I can see no justification for limiting them to the extent to which they were in fact limited. For example, before the last war, the Governor of the Gold Coast could sanction supplementary expenditure only up to a maximum of £1,000; I found on arrival in the colony that a much higher maximum was desirable if time and money were not to be wasted in telegraphing for the necessary authority. As a result of my representations I was given authority to sanction on my own responsibility supplementary expenditure up to a limit of £5,000 (or £10,000 in urgent cases connected with the war), and perhaps if I had pressed the matter this limit would have been extended. I see no reason, however, why any special permission should have been necessary in order that I should exercise a responsibility which clearly had to be exercised. If a Governor cannot be trusted to exercise his discretion in such matters he should not be allowed to hold office.

There is also the question of writing off losses of public money and stores. Where fraud or negligence on the part of a public officer is involved the sanction of the Secretary of State must be

obtained before a loss can be written off,* and as to this I have no very strong feelings ; some Governors would perhaps prefer to leave the decision in such cases to the Secretary of State, although, as the Governor has in any case to make a recommendation which is generally followed, I should myself prefer to assume the whole responsibility. But where there is no suggestion of fraud or negligence, and the value exceeds a certain figure, the Governor cannot himself authorise the writing off of the amount involved, but must submit the matter for the decision of the Secretary of State. Before the last war the maximum which the Governor of the Gold Coast could write off was £25 ; the committee referred to above recommended the increase of this maximum to £100 for the period of the war. But why have a maximum at all :

What I should like to see is the removal from the Regulations of vexatious restrictions on the authority of the colonial Governor. It is not a question of giving him greater responsibilities or powers. He has already in other matters powers which are considerable, responsibilities far greater than those which are withheld from him by the Regulations I have mentioned. In these comparatively minor matters he is swathed in red tape, which delays action and has an irritating effect ; in important matters, the question, for instance, of whether or not a condemned criminal should be executed, his powers are absolute.† It is true that, apart from the question of whether or not a murderer should hang, his action may be disavowed or his decision revoked by the Secretary of State as the result of a petition, but there are innumerable matters of importance of which the Secretary of State never hears on which Governors have to take decisions, decisions affecting not one man but the happiness and well-being of thousands and perhaps even of millions.

Apart from these definite responsibilities a Governor has an enormous indirect power and influence in the colony over which he is set. The energy or lack of energy of a Governor is reflected only too clearly in the work of the Civil Service and in the general welfare

* During the last war Governors were given authority, as a result of a recommendation by the Committee already referred to, to write off money lost to a maximum of £25, and stores to a value of £50, even where there was fraud or negligence.

† But see p. 228.

of the people. His personal example and the kind of life he leads have a greater influence on the colony than is commonly recognised. No Governor can hope to be perfect, but some are worse than others, and do the greater harm.

The responsibility for advising His Majesty as to the appointment of a Governor rests with the Secretary of State, and it is a heavy responsibility. Too often in the past, however, appointments of convenience have been made, the convenience, be it noted, not of the colony but of the government for the time being in power in the United Kingdom. It is, for instance, very convenient to provide a colonial governorship for a political supporter who deserves some recognition for party services but is perhaps unsuitable for a ministerial post. And cases have been known of permanent officials from Whitehall who, for one reason or another, have been translated to the colonies as Governors. Such appointments are, of course, unfair to the members of the Colonial Civil Service, who with some justification regard these offices as the prize posts to which they can look forward, but this is not the most serious aspect of the matter. The real point is that such appointments are, *as a rule*, unfair to the colonies. I realise that Lord Lugard, for instance, did not receive his training in the Colonial Service, but he was an exceptional man, and did in fact know a great deal about Africa before he became High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria. Sir Gordon Guggisberg, one of the most illustrious of my predecessors as Governor of the Gold Coast, was a soldier by profession, but he had been for some years in West Africa, in the Civil Service, before he was made a Governor. The man who goes to a colony as Governor with no previous colonial experience may be so exceptional that experience is unnecessary to him, but looking back over many years I can remember some who were not so fortunate. Such Governors as a rule are at the mercy of their advisers and, if they are wise, leave a great deal to their Colonial Secretaries, who know their work. But I doubt whether such an arrangement would be held by anyone as desirable or fair.

I referred above to the humanity of the Colonial Office officials. They have perhaps been over-humane to me; they have certainly been over-humane to other Governors. Bearing in mind how

important to a colony, for good or ill, is the Governor selected by the Secretary of State, a special duty rests with him and his staff to remove failures, or men whose health has broken down, or, at least, not to reappoint such Governors to other colonies. Yet I have known a Governor whose health was so bad that he could not be expected to perform his duties efficiently, transferred, to the surprise of all who knew him, to another colony. I remember once being told by a Colonial Office official that no action could be taken regarding a certain Governor whose private life had become a public scandal because there was no official knowledge of his behaviour. How such "official" knowledge could have been obtained unless the Governor himself reported it in an official despatch I am at a loss to explain.

When I first joined the Colonial Office in 1940 it struck me that the views of that Office were treated with scant respect at inter-departmental conferences and in official correspondence. The appointment of Lord Lloyd as Secretary of State for the Colonies in May, 1940, effected a startling change. He was not the man to brook a disregard of his opinions, whether expressed by himself or his representatives. In peace time he might not have been a success as Secretary of State as he was too impatient of rules and of red tape, some of which is undoubtedly necessary if work is to proceed smoothly, although even in peace time it is possible that his shock tactics might have infused new life into colonial administration without doing any great harm. But at the time when he took over the Colonial Office, when the British Empire faced its greatest danger, he was superb, and his untimely death was a disaster to the colonies and to the Empire. It was inevitable that a man of his strength of character should have enemies. I found him courteous and charming, quick (perhaps at times too quick) to take a decision, but always ready to hear both sides of a question. I liked and admired him, and valued the confidence and friendship he gave me.* A short time before both men died I lunched with him and the late Lord Lothian

* Shortly before his death, Lord Lloyd gave me a copy of his book, *Egypt since Cromer*, adding to the inscription a reference to Psalm 72, verse 4: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

in a private room at the Ritz, and there discussed matters relating to the West Indies.

Shortly afterwards publicity was given to the proposed exchange of fifty American destroyers for bases in the West Indies and Newfoundland, and the constitution of the British committee to discuss the terms with the American representatives was actively discussed. Not unnaturally, the Foreign Office wished to have one of their men as chairman of the conference, but Lord Lloyd refused to agree to this. Lord Lloyd had, of course, much experience of Foreign Office ways when he was High Commissioner in Egypt, and he was not an admirer of that institution. A compromise was effected by the appointment of Lord Cranborne, then Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, as chairman, and of myself as vice-chairman ; as such I presided at all the meetings except the formal opening, and consulted Lord Cranborne, who was always most helpful, when difficulties arose. One of the members of the conference, from whom I received the greatest assistance, was the late Admiral Sir Sidney Bailey.

The demands of the American delegates were seldom acceptable to the representatives of Newfoundland and Bermuda, and I do not think that the Americans realised the difficulties that arose from the objections of these representatives. The Prime Minister had given an assurance that no concessions would be given against the will of the colonists ; consent to any concessions could have been obtained constitutionally from most of the West Indian colonies through the Governor's control, in one form or another, of the local legislature, but in the case of Bermuda the position was different. Here there was an entirely elected House of Assembly, established under an ancient constitution, and it would have been quite impossible constitutionally to have obtained the consent of the colonists except through the free vote of this House.

The representatives of Newfoundland and Bermuda objected, not unnaturally, to the growing demands of the American delegates (who were acting under direction from Washington) for more and more concessions, and to the way in which they brushed aside any suggestions that the rights of the local people should be considered. Bermuda is a small colony and the Americans took little account of

the feelings of the inhabitants. It was only at the personal request of the Prime Minister that the Bermuda representatives consented to remain and attend the discussions ; at one time they gave me notice that they could not agree to the American demands and were leaving for Bermuda immediately to put the matter before the Bermuda Legislature. The position was such that the British Government had no option but to agree to practically everything the Americans asked for. We needed those destroyers, old as they were, so badly at that stage of the war that we were in a hopeless position for bargaining.

On the 27th March, 1941, the Agreement* was signed, in the Cabinet Room at No. 10 Downing Street, and after signing† Mr. Churchill presented to the three American delegates three fountain-pens which he had used. Mr. Churchill then shook hands with me and congratulated me on having, as he put it, brought my ship safely to port. I was grateful for his congratulations but wish I could have received them on a happier occasion. However, although the terms of the Agreement were not satisfactory from our point of view, we got on very well with the American delegates, and before they sailed from Bristol on their return to America, two of the delegates sent me a personal telegram, which read : "Just to have the last word. Best of luck."

The British delegates all felt at the time that we had been forced by circumstances into a bad bargain, bad for the Empire as a whole, but particularly bad from the point of view of the West Indians and the people of Bermuda and Newfoundland. The way in which they accepted the sacrifice was not the least of their contributions to the war effort.

A Committee of the League of Coloured Peoples presented a memorandum to the Conference of British Missionary Societies in 1942, which stated, in connection with the American occupation of

* Cmd. 6259.

† The British signatories were Mr. Churchill, Lord Cranborne (Secretary of State for the Dominions) and Lord Moyne (Secretary of State for the Colonies—Lord Lloyd had died while the discussions were proceeding). The American signatories were Mr. Winant, the Ambassador, and Mr. Fahy, General Malony, and Commander Biesemeier, the three American delegates. A supplementary Protocol was also signed by them and by Mr. Vincent Massey, High Commissioner for Canada, and two other Canadian representatives.

West Indian Bases : "Race relations have already deteriorated as the Americans have sought to introduce their "Jim-Crow" practices . . . The Committee, therefore, while recognising that the Americans must remain in the West Indies for the duration of the war, consider that negotiations should be reopened with the American Government as soon as possible, to secure that immediately after the war the Americans should be repaid their fifty destroyers and the leases terminated."

As I have pointed out above, the organisation of the Colonial Office needs adjustment. In the first place, one Secretary of State cannot possibly cope with the immense, and increasing, amount of work which he ought to deal with if colonial questions are to receive the attention which is their due. Questions affecting Palestine alone, during the past few years, have been sufficient to provide full-time employment for a Cabinet Minister, yet the Secretary of State for the Colonies had to deal with Palestine affairs as well as the affairs of the sixty millions of people in the rest of the colonial empire. As the Foreign Office had to deal in any case with the important international questions affecting Palestine, there is every reason why it should have taken over complete responsibility for the country* ; if the Foreign Office was unable or unwilling to be responsible for Palestine (and who could blame their unwillingness to take over such a "baby"), a temporary Ministry should have been set up to deal with this unhappy country. But even with Palestine out of the way, I doubt whether a single Secretary of State could cope efficiently with the whole colonial empire, and a separate Secretary of State for Africa is probably the best solution.†

In any case (but the need will be greater if there is only a single Secretary of State for all the colonies) there should be a substantial devolution of responsibility to the senior members of the Office. We have heard a great deal lately of the need for a reorganisation of the administrative machine in the colonies, where the Colonial

* This suggestion was made by a former Secretary of State for the Colonies, Colonel Oliver Stanley, in an Address given by him at the Royal Empire Society on the 3rd September, 1945.

† Since this was written the appointment has been announced of a Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, who will undoubtedly relieve the Secretary of State of much work. I hope the arrangement will work well.

Secretary is said to be a "bottle-neck" in which public business gets congested and delayed. I have my own views about this,* but I am quite sure that no such "bottle-necks" exist in the colonies I have known as have delayed work in the Colonial Office during some of the last few years. There has recently been a notable improvement in the position.

But perhaps the worst handicap to efficiency is the division of the Colonial Office into both "geographical" and "subject"† departments, and the immense number of "advisers" on every conceivable subject. The "geographical" departments deal with certain groups of colonies,‡ which generally have similar problems. My experience has been that the staff of these "geographical" departments acquire a knowledge of the colonies and of individuals in the colonies, both official and unofficial, which is absolutely invaluable. This knowledge could, of course, be increased by the different systems of recruiting and the more frequent visits which I have already recommended, but in spite of the handicaps of the present system the "geographical" departments possess a knowledge of the colonies which is surprising and a sympathy for the people in these colonies which is altogether admirable.

In spite of the fact that the staffs are interchangeable, some of the "subject" departments seem to lack sufficient sympathy for the colonial point of view and to consider the problems they have to deal with in a theoretical vacuum, which is too often remote from practical possibilities. They are like the "experts" referred to in the note on page 117, trying "to adapt native life to scientific principles," and looking "at life through departmental blinkers." As an example of this I can quote the opposition I had to fight in order to secure support for a loan from the Colonial Development Fund to finance the construction of a central sugar factory in British Honduras; there were, no doubt, numerous theoretical objections to the scheme, but in practice it saved the sugar industry of the colony and helped considerably to abate the serious menace of unemployment.

* See p. 304.

† e.g., The Finance and Development Department, The Social Service Department, The Welfare Department.

‡ e.g., The West African Department, The West Indian Department.

As against this, the Colonial Office supported two other development schemes for British Honduras proposed by private companies before I went to the colony, because they were sound in theory, although in practice they failed dismally, as local opinion was always convinced that they would. I admit that I also accepted the theoretical arguments in their favour, but at that time I was too new to British Honduras conditions to oppose schemes already "blessed" by the Colonial Office, and I am afraid that I was also largely influenced by the grave need for any development which might provide employment in the crisis then existing.

I am not suggesting that the "subject" departments make frequent mistakes; they are certainly more often right than wrong, and their accumulated knowledge on their particular subjects is very considerable. But there seems to be a tendency in these departments to brush aside as irrelevant the local political and social considerations which the Colonial governments consider to be of importance. It is for this reason that I consider that they should be purely advisory to the "geographical" departments, and not be given any executive authority. No decision should be taken on the advice of a "subject" department, and no communication sent to a colonial government, without the knowledge of the "geographical" department concerned. For all I know this may now be the rule, but, if so, I have reason for thinking that the rule is not always observed.

I have mentioned that the scattering of Colonial Office staff among various buildings in different parts of London prevented the right hand from knowing what the left hand was doing; the same effect results from the dual organisation of "geographical" and "subject" departments, an organisation which seems to me to make the worst of both worlds. An organisation on a purely "geographical" or a purely "subject" basis would be logical and workable: the present organisation is neither. In my view the best arrangement would be to preserve the "geographical" departments in their present form (but with increased staffs), and to place the "subject" departments on the same footing as the "Advisers" to the Secretary of State.

And a determined effort should be made to avoid the delays involved by the reference of matters to these numerous "Advisers." Very often the "Advisers" are men who have served in the colonies,

and are, in theory at least, no better qualified to express an opinion on a professional or technical matter than the Head of the Colonial Department who has put up a proposal which is supported by the Governor. It is irritating to these local professional and technical officials to have their carefully thought-out plans, based on local knowledge and experience, criticised and possibly turned down on the advice of an "Adviser" whom they consider as no better than themselves, and certainly possessing less local knowledge. I have watched with interest, and amusement, some of these professional disagreements, and I have wondered in recent years whether the colonies have really benefited from the increasing number of "Advisers" to the Secretary of State.*

* In the House of Commons on the 1st July, 1947, it was stated that the staff of the Colonial Office had increased from 450 in 1939 to 1,140 in 1947. The whole of this increase is not, of course, due to the appointment of additional advisers.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLD COAST

IN 1941 I was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Gold Coast and "kissed hands" on my appointment, at Buckingham Palace, on the 11th July. Two other Governors "kissed hands" on the same day, Sir Douglas Jardine (Leeward Islands) and Sir Hubert Stevenson (Sierra Leone); I had served with both in the Nigerian Secretariat. I left England, with my wife and younger daughter, at the beginning of October, in a small steamer which formed one of a convoy of fifty ships; the commodore of the convoy was in our ship, which made the voyage more interesting as we heard what was going on from him. The voyage was uneventful, but we saw a German aeroplane one morning and the same night one of our escort believed she had sunk a submarine which tried to attack us. The blackout on the ship was very unpleasant, and the atmosphere in the saloons after dark, especially when we entered the tropics, was almost unbearable, but the captain of the ship, one of the best type of merchant navy officers, did a great deal to make the voyage endurable. We reached Freetown after more than three weeks and stayed for a few days as the guest of Sir Hubert Stevenson at Government House. Then, embarking in another steamer, we spent another week on the voyage to Takoradi, the first port of the Gold Coast.

The Gold Coast consists of three main areas, the Gold Coast Colony, the Colony of Ashanti, and the Protectorate of the Northern Territories; in addition there is a strip of the former German colony of Togoland, which was mandated territory and is now under Trusteeship, administered from the Gold Coast. (There is a French Trusteeship over the rest of Togoland.) The total area of the Gold Coast is 91,800 square miles,* and the population about four millions, almost all being Negroes.

Along the coastline there is an open plain covered with scrub and grass and with few trees, of poor fertility and low rainfall; towards

* Including the 13,000 miles of the British sphere of Togoland.

the eastern end of the colony it is over fifty miles wide. Behind this lies a dense evergreen forest, containing mahogany and other valuable timber trees, the oil-palm (which yields palm oil and palm kernels), and the cultivated cocoa trees ; small but numerous farms exist in forest clearings. Behind this again the country is more open, and trees are sparsely scattered except along the rivers and watercourses. There is very little high ground, and the highest mountains in the country are between 2,500 and 2,900 feet above sea level. The principal river is the Volta, which rises in French territory and forms the western frontier of the Northern Territories ; it then crosses from west to east, forming for some distance the boundary between Ashanti and the Northern Territories, and finally enters the sea not far from the eastern boundary of the colony. The main stream is known as the Black Volta, its principal tributary being the White Volta, which itself has a tributary known as the Red Volta. Other rivers are the Pra, the Ankobra, and the Tano. For some reason the rivers of the Gold Coast have never been used for traffic to the same extent as those in Nigeria ; today the numerous roads make their use scarcely necessary.

A physical feature of great interest is Lake Bosumtwi, about twenty-five miles south-east of Kumasi, the chief town of Ashanti. The lake, which has an area of about eighteen square miles, lies in a deep depression surrounded by hills, which rise in some places to as much as 1,200 feet above the level of the water. Small streams flow into the lake but there is no outlet and the water level is kept fairly constant by evaporation, the depth being about 240 feet. There is no certainty as to the origin of Lake Bosumtwi, but it is most probably the result of volcanic action. The waters of the lake are held sacred and the usual types of canoes and fishing appliances are not allowed on it. The inhabitants of the surrounding villages fish from logs, propelled by hand, and with nets made with cane. In recent years sea-planes have alighted on the surface of the lake.

The largest section of the population of the Gold Coast is of Akan origin. The Akans include the Fantis, who inhabit the central portion of the Colony, from the coast to about fifty miles inland, and the Ashantis, who occupy the country to which they have given their name. Both speak dialects of the Twi language. In the

south-east of the country are the Ewe* tribes, while the Ga tribe occupies an area around Accra, the capital. In the Northern Territories are the Gonjas, the Dagombas, and the Mamprusi. There are, in addition, a number of other tribes of less importance. The Hausa language, although not indigenous to the Gold Coast, is widely spoken, particularly in trading centres.

The people are mostly pagans or animists and there are comparatively few Muslims. Many are Christians, and Christian missions have been established for a long time, especially in the coastal areas. Notwithstanding this, and even in those areas where Christianity and education have the greatest influence, there is a great deal of superstition and belief in juju. In 1943, at Srogboe, a place on the coast less than twelve miles from Keta, a girl of five years was murdered by a fetish man in order that her bones might be used for juju purposes.† In 1945 the "Regent" of the Edina Stool‡ and four others were convicted of the murder in Elmina town of a girl of ten years of age, who was brutally mutilated, *while still alive*, in order that certain parts of her body might be available for a juju ceremony§; Elmina also is on the coast and has been under European influence since 1482! In 1944 (as referred to briefly above** and more fully later††) a minor chief was murdered in order that his blood might be used to "wash the Stool" of the late Sir Ofori Atta. So, in spite of centuries of contact with European ideas, in spite of the spread of Christianity and the high standard of education reached by some of the people of the Gold Coast, we find in the colony the grossest forms of superstition and savagery; this fact should not be overlooked.

Apart from an alleged visit by French navigators in the fourteenth century, the first European contact with the Gold Coast was made by the Portuguese in 1471, and a trade at once sprang up in gold,

* Pronounced Eh-way.

† Case of R. v. Agidegita Afaku.

‡ The Stool is a specially shaped seat used in the Gold Coast as the official seat, or throne, of a Chief, and is symbolically used when referring to a State or its rulers (compare "The British Throne"). The property of a State is spoken of as "Stool property."

§ Case of R. v. Kweku Ewusi and others.

** See p. 66.

†† See p. 219.

"elephants' teeth," and pepper. A few years later the traffic in slaves began and before long it became so important that it almost killed all other forms of trade.

Along the Gold Coast there are no natural harbours and a heavy surf makes landing on the open beaches a very hazardous business. Except in the single case of the Volta river there are not even any large rivers, whose estuaries, as in Nigeria, might have made safe anchorages for the sailing ships of early days. Trading from the ships themselves, the sale of European goods and the purchase of slaves, was therefore very difficult and it became necessary to establish depots ashore, strong enough to be defended by small garrisons against attacks by hostile African tribes or European enemies. It is for this reason that the shores of the Gold Coast were studded with castles and forts, of which more than thirty still remain in various stages of repair.

The first of these castles, the great fortress of St. Jorge de la Mina, was built by the Portuguese in 1482 (ten years before Columbus discovered the New World). A fleet of ten vessels brought out from Portugal marked and numbered stones to facilitate the quick building of the castle,* and the necessary masons and other artisans who quickly got to work; as soon as the building was completed the fleet sailed away, leaving behind a sufficient garrison to hold this first outpost of Europe in West Africa. For a century and a half it remained the headquarters of the Portuguese and the central depot for their growing trade in slaves and gold, but in 1637 it was captured by the Dutch, and Portuguese power soon vanished for ever from the Gold Coast. In 1872 the Dutch sold Elmina Castle, as it is now called, to the British.

The castle, which covers a large area, is protected by a double moat, cut in the solid rock, and the main entrance is across a draw-bridge. Within the walls of the castle (as is the case in the other castles of the Gold Coast) are dungeons in which the slaves were kept until the time came for them to be shipped away; some of these dungeons are below ground level, and almost all of them are damp, gloomy, and airless. Some of the rooms shown as dungeons were

* Similar action was taken in connection with the building of Christiansborg Castle by the Danes. Pre-fabrication is not a new idea.

really store-rooms, or provided accommodation for the garrison, poor accommodation from our point of view but infinitely better than anything the unfortunate slaves were condemned to live in. Elmina Castle today is in a good state of preservation, much repair work having been done when it was in use, during the war, as a military training school for artisans. There are many old inscriptions in the Castle, the most interesting being that recording its capture by the Dutch in 1637.*

Next in interest to Elmina is the great Castle of Cape Coast, built by the British in 1662, captured by the Dutch the following year, and retaken by the British in 1664; since that date it has been continuously in British hands and, until headquarters were established at Accra in 1874, was the principal British establishment on the Gold Coast. It has withstood attacks by Africans and bombardments by French fleets and has seen much history in the making. In 1844 a "Bond" was signed at the Castle in which some of the Fanti Chiefs acknowledged British power and jurisdiction;† the centenary of this Bond was celebrated at the same place in 1944. Within the courtyard are to be seen the tombstones of George Maclean, for many years Governor of the British Settlements on the Gold Coast, and of his wife, the poetess L. E. Landon (L.E.L.); she died suddenly in the Castle in 1838, only two months after her arrival, and unscrupulous enemies accused Maclean of having poisoned her.

The third of the great castles is Christiansborg, built by the Danes in 1661 and now used as the Governor's residence. It was captured by some Africans, through a trick, in 1693, and held by them for a year, being handed back then to the Danish authorities on payment. The keys of the Castle were, however, not returned, and are still in the possession of the Chief of Akwamu, where I have seen them, hung on an iron chain round the neck of one of the Chief's attendants. The Castle is probably the most interesting Government House in the colonial empire, with an atmosphere of its own. It is always

* This inscription has been translated from the Dutch as follows: "While the most distinguished and noble Count Maurice of Nassau was Governor of Brazil, this very strong fortress was taken by force under the leadership of Colonel Coine after three days (fighting) on the 29th day of August, 1637."

† For copy of Bond, see page 200.

damp as a result of the salt spray from the waves which wash its foundations, but it gets the full benefit of the sea breeze and is as cool as any residence in a West African coastal town can be. After having been used for many years as a slave depot, it was, after its purchase by the British in 1850, used for a time as a lunatic asylum ; now, as the Governor's residence, it has probably reached its nadir ! Visitors enjoyed being shown over the Castle and taken through the dungeons and while the American troops were in Accra large parties visited it daily. One afternoon as I was walking across the courtyard two American soldiers came through the gate and, not seeing the janitor who was usually on duty as a guide, one of them greeted me with : "Say, where's the guy who shows people round this joint ?" Had I been quicker in the uptake I might have earned a tip !

Other interesting fortresses are the German "Gross Fredericksburg" at Princes (1682), and Anamabu (1753), held at different times by Dutch, Swedes, Danes and British, but there are several others still in a tolerable state of repair and many in picturesque ruin.

The garrisons of these fortresses, and the other Europeans who lived in them, suffered terribly from disease. The causes of yellow fever and malaria were unknown, no quinine was available, and the conditions of life generally were unfavourable to health. Presumably the Governors of the castles lived in greater comfort than the soldiers, yet of 85 Danish Governors who served on the Gold Coast between the years 1658 and 1850 no less than 34 died at their posts, six dying in the ten years following 1830. Owing to the war with Ashanti the number of white soldiers at Cape Coast and Sierra Leone was increased between the years 1822 and 1825. Of the 1,685 who were sent to West Africa, 421 died at Cape Coast within four years and 877 at Sierra Leone and other stations ; the surviving 387 were invalided home ! Such casualties were not due only to insect-borne diseases. It is said that for a year the troops had not received a single ration of fresh meat, the water used by them was exceedingly bad, and vegetables scarce and of very indifferent quality. Of 42 women and 67 children landed with a detachment of troops in 1829, 29 women and 41 children were dead within 15 months.*

When the Portuguese established themselves at Elmina and other

* *Gold Coast Records*, compiled by Major J. J. Crooks, pp. 266-7.

places towards the end of the fifteenth century, they did their utmost to exclude the merchants of other nations from trade along the coast, but they made no attempt to establish any form of control over the country or its people. Later, when other nations had built forts along the coast, the same policy towards the natives was followed until the nineteenth century. Rent was generally paid to the Chiefs for the land on which the castles or forts were erected, and within these strongholds the European nations exercised authority; beyond the range of their guns they had no power, and no efforts were made to obtain territorial concessions. To us, accustomed to clear-cut boundaries and control over "hinterlands," the arrangements on the Gold Coast in these early days seem peculiar, but the Europeans were there not to establish colonies but to trade—principally for slaves—and trade rivalries were the only international problems. Gradually, as the slave trade languished, most of the nations abandoned their establishments, until only the Danes, the Dutch, and the British remained. The Danes sold their castles and forts to the British in 1850, and after an unsuccessful attempt at dividing the country between the Dutch and the British the former also withdrew in 1872. Meanwhile British influence over the interior had been extending slowly. The Fanti tribes of the coastal areas sought protection from the Ashantis, who frequently raided their country, and there had already been several Ashanti wars.* In one of them Sir Charles MacCarthy, the Governor of the British West African Settlements, had been killed when his army was defeated in 1824; two years later the Ashantis were defeated by British troops and their Fanti allies, but the British government had had enough of the Gold Coast, and were glad to hand over the forts, and such rights as they had, to a Committee of London Merchants in 1828.

The Committee were fortunate in securing the services of Mr. George Maclean as their Governor, and his administration from 1830 to 1843 was a most successful one. With little material power, this remarkable man exercised a considerable influence over the people of the country and when the British government decided to resume its control over the British Settlements on the Gold Coast it was largely due to Maclean's influence, now only partly official, that

* See p. 257.

British authority was so quietly accepted. At various times the Gold Coast Settlements were under the Sierra Leone Government, but were finally separated in 1874 and established as a separate colony ; the colony of Lagos continued until 1886 to be administered as a part of the Gold Coast.

Throughout the early years of the new colony the principal problem was the hostility of Ashanti, and this was not finally overcome until 1901, when Ashanti was formally annexed as a colony. The Governor of the Gold Coast is therefore Governor of two colonies, the Gold Coast Colony and the Colony of Ashanti (as well as being Governor of the Protectorate of the Northern Territories).

Although the traffic in slaves had for a long time eclipsed all other trade, it was the search for gold that first brought the Portuguese to West Africa. Owing to the quantity of gold dust the first navigators were able to buy at Elmina the Portuguese formed the opinion that a mine existed in the neighbourhood, and there they built their first castle, St. George of the Mine ; for the same reason they called the country the Gold Coast. The mines actually were further inland, and it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that deep mining on a big scale was begun. Today the gold mines employ hundreds of Europeans and thousands of Africans, and the gold exported in 1946 was valued at £5,573,000. Diamonds, chiefly suitable for industrial purposes, are also exported ; exports in 1946 were valued at £622,500. Manganese ore exports in 1946 were valued at £2,264,000. There are also large bauxite deposits, and during the last war quantities of bauxite ore were exported ; in 1946 the value of bauxite exported was £365,000.

Apart from minerals, the principal export from the Gold Coast is cocoa, the value of cocoa shipped in 1946 being £9,488,000. The cocoa tree was introduced into the country in 1879 by a native of the Gold Coast, who brought a few seeds from Fernando Po. The cocoa farms are planted and worked entirely by African farmers, there being no European plantations, and, indeed, few African-owned farms of any great size. The first export of cocoa was in 1891, and the crop has grown steadily since that date. The trees are planted throughout the forest areas of the Colony and Ashanti, but have in recent years been seriously affected by disease.

In the northern part of the forest country the kola tree is grown, and kolas are exported to other parts of West Africa. The kola nut is very popular, especially in the northern areas of the Gold Coast, Nigeria, and adjacent French territories, and in Nigeria it is used ceremonially ; the custom is for a host to break a nut and offer part of it to his guest, eating the other part himself. Other exports are palm oil and palm kernels, lime juice, raw rubber, and timber, principally mahogany.

The people grow, for their own consumption, large crops of cassava, maize and other cereals, and along the coast they do a great deal of fishing, some of the catch being dried and smoked for sale up-country. Comparatively little meat is eaten, but in Ashanti and some parts of the Colony there is a large consumption of snails, the annual value of which is said to be about £10,000 ; so important is this industry that bye-laws made and enforced by the Native Authorities establish regular seasons for snail catching, and protect the immature snails.

When well-meaning persons succeeded in compelling the West African governments to limit the importation of spirits into the country they did a great deal of harm. Illicit distillation of spirits from palm wine and other vegetable products has spread like wildfire, and it is as impossible to stop this as it was impossible to enforce prohibition in the United States. In the Gold Coast this question presents a major problem.

When I assumed duty as Governor of the Gold Coast in November, 1941, my predecessor, Sir Arnold Hodson, was still on leave. He had done long tours of duty and was entitled to much accumulated leave, but it was felt that the post should not be left unfilled for this long period (about a year) in time of war. The colony was therefore required to pay the salaries of two Governors at the same time, and, as I was shortly seconded to act as Governor of Nigeria for several months, the Gold Coast was actually paying the salaries of two Governors, neither of whom was in the colony ! Rude friends have suggested that the Gold Coast prospered because of (I prefer to think it was despite) this. It is a good thing that the interval between the departure of one senior officer and the arrival of his successor should be used to test junior men in responsible positions, and this is the

normal practice. But when the interval would be unduly long, owing to the amount of leave to which the retiring officer is entitled, it is unfair to the colony to keep the post vacant for the whole period ; the acting man can carry on for some months the established policy, but it is difficult for him to initiate new policies, however urgently necessary they may be.

The Gold Coast at the end of 1941 was a very busy place. Surrounded by Vichy French territory, precautions had to be taken against attack.* The headquarters of the General Officer Commanding in West Africa had been established at Accra, in certain buildings given up by Achimota College. The harbour at Takoradi, which some critics had considered too large for the peace-time needs of the Gold Coast, was congested with shipping, as the surf ports† (except Accra—but even Accra was closed for a time) had been closed owing to the danger from submarines.‡ New airfields were being prepared and the existing airfields at Accra and Takoradi were being enlarged. Defence works and military buildings were springing up everywhere. I had frequent discussions with the Governor of Nigeria (Sir Bernard Bourdillon) who was Chairman of the West African Governors' Conference, and I am glad to say that, contrary to a long-standing precedent, the happiest relations existed between the Governors of Nigeria and the Gold Coast during my service in the latter colony. It was in fact very fortunate that the Governors of the four West African colonies during the war were personal friends.

Within a few days of my arrival in the colony there occurred a sudden strike of workers on the Gold Coast Government railway and in Takoradi harbour, who had previously demanded an increase of wages and other concessions which, with their consent, had been referred to an arbitrator. This strike held up essential war work in the harbour, which had to be handled by naval ratings and military personnel, and after the men had been warned that this strike in war-time was illegal a number of arrests were made. There was some

* See p. 256.

† These are open roadsteads, and cargo is carried to and from the shore in surf boats specially built for the purpose, and manned by a dozen or more paddlers.

‡ One steamer was torpedoed and sunk while at anchor in Accra roadstead in 1941. In 1942 an enemy submarine attacked a number of fishing canoes off Keta, sinking some of the canoes and wounding some of the African fishermen by rifle fire ; this wanton outrage resulted in a number of recruits from the Keta area joining the army.

sabotage and disorder which was easily dealt with by the police, a sufficient force having been drafted to the disturbed areas. Some persons were injured but none was killed. Later I agreed to respite the sentences of imprisonment inflicted by the courts on the men convicted of disorderly conduct when there was a general resumption of work, and to reinstate workers in their previous employment except in the case of two ringleaders. There were sympathetic strikes and some disorder in other parts of the country, but each was dealt with firmly as it occurred. The Secretary of State expressed the opinion that the matter had been admirably handled and endorsed the tribute I paid to the police for their firm but restrained conduct. The release of the arrested men after work had been resumed by the strikers, which led to some forebodings, was, I am sure, a good move, and there were no further disorders as a result of this leniency. I am convinced that if disorders are met firmly at an early stage, *and with sufficient force*, much loss of life and damage to property can be averted; but after the disorders have subsided and passions have cooled a degree of leniency to all but the worst offenders will have a good effect.

When I had been in the Gold Coast for three months, and before I had had time to study the many problems of the colony, I was asked to act as Governor of Nigeria (and Chairman of the West African Governors' Conference) during the absence on leave of Sir Bernard Bourdillon. I went to Nigeria in February, 1942, and was there until June, this being my third period of service in that territory. Soon after my arrival I was faced with serious troubles with Africans in government employment. Some time previously a strike on the Nigerian railway had resulted in the retirement of a senior European official and a promise by the Governor of a cost of living bonus with effect from the previous October; since then a Cost of Living Committee had been examining the position but its report was not yet ready and on the advice of my principal officials I had decided to grant an interim bonus at once. The amount of the interim bonus was considered insufficient by the leaders of the various unions, who thought they were in a position to force the Government into further concessions, and they instructed their followers to refuse it, to go on strike, and to demonstrate by means of a procession. This meant the

stopping of urgent war work and could not be tolerated, and two days before the date fixed for the strike and procession I decided to make a personal appeal to the people of Lagos by means of a broadcast. I therefore spoke to them as a friend, referring to their duty not to impede the war effort, pointing out that strikes and processions of this sort were illegal during the war, and warning them that the Government was going to take all the steps necessary to see that essential work was carried on and to maintain order.* My speech, translations of which were also broadcast in several local languages (including "pidgin" English, which sounded particularly funny on this occasion), had a good effect, as indicating that the Government did not intend to yield to threats and was prepared to face disorders firmly. The necessary police and military precautions were taken on the morning for which the demonstrations were scheduled, but my warning proved to have been sufficient and nothing happened. The Secretary of State expressed to me his appreciation of the way in which the situation had been handled.

I was very much struck on this occasion by the irresponsibility of certain African "leaders." One man urged that I should come out and meet the people at a public meeting on the racecourse and was indignant when I refused. An elected member of the Legislative Council told me that the Government should pay whatever the men demanded ; I asked him whether he was prepared to vote in Council for additional taxation to cover the cost of this extravagant suggestion but he did not see the need for any additional tax. I think it would have been advisable, when the vote for the cost of living bonus was taken in Legislative Council, to put through at the same time, and if possible by means of the same Resolution, the necessary approval for additional taxation, in order to impress upon the public (and perhaps even on the legislators !) the connection between expenditure and revenue. One does not expect a proper appreciation of finance from the ordinary Lagos man-in-the-street, but one is entitled to look for something better from an elected councillor, who ought to know that money to be spent must come from somewhere.

During my stay in Nigeria I went to Kaduna to present to the Sultan of Sokoto the insignia of his Honorary C.M.G., on the

* For a copy of this speech, see Appendix B, p. 315.

occasion of the opening of the Northern Provinces Chiefs' Conference. That evening I gave a dinner party to the senior officials in Kaduna and twelve of the senior Chiefs. On my right sat the Sultan of Sokoto, and on my left the Shehu of Bornu, hereditary enemies now living peaceably as neighbours under the *Pax Britannica*. Another guest was the Emir of Katsena, who had visited England on several occasions. In conversation with the Shehu (through an interpreter) he told me that he had been a soldier and had fought in Rabeh's army. Rabeh was a soldier of fortune who had once served in the Egyptian Sudan ; when Egyptian power had been overthrown by the Mahdi he led his troops across country into Bornu, which he conquered in 1893. I reminded the Shehu of this, and expressed surprise that he should have fought for Rabeh, who had killed his father. "Yes," he replied, "and he would have killed me too if I had not fought for him ; that is why I became one of his soldiers." A good enough reason. At this dinner Hausa was spoken generally, but some of the Chiefs understood English ; they drank no wine as they were all Muslims.

Soon after my return to the Gold Coast in 1942 the appointment was announced of Viscount Swinton as Resident Minister in West Africa, with his headquarters at Accra.

For Lord Swinton and his work I have the greatest admiration. He had previously served as Secretary of State for the Colonies, from 1931 to 1935, and it was during his regime at the Colonial Office that I was appointed Governor of British Honduras ; in that capacity I received from him all possible support and consideration. His experience in the Colonial Office helped him to appreciate the difficulties of colonial governments, and his period of office as Resident Minister was a success. During the war, and especially at the time when Vichy French territory in West Africa was a potential danger to the neighbouring British colonies, it was necessary to have a man of Cabinet rank on the spot to take urgent decisions, and to settle conflicting views held by the local governments and the Service chiefs, not to mention our American allies. Lord Swinton also had much to do with the increased production in the West African colonies of minerals and foodstuffs urgently required in connection with the war effort. Personally, I always got on well

with him, our only disagreement being due to the different opinions we held regarding the functions of his staff.

The position of a Resident Minister, however, is an anomalous one, and too much depends on personalities for such an arrangement to be successful. The colonial Governors took orders from two Cabinet Ministers, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Resident Minister, and there is Biblical authority for saying that a man cannot serve two masters, although I hesitate to express an opinion as to which, in this case, was Mammon. Even if the Minister himself and the Governors can be relied on, as discreet and experienced men, to keep the peace, their respective staffs, younger and less tolerant, are not so likely to get along without friction. I believe that in the West Indies the same difficulty was found, peace at the top, but friction between the advisers of the Comptroller for Development and Welfare and the Heads of Departments in the various West Indian colonies.*

I believe myself that far too much importance is attached to the fetish of regional grouping.† I have no experience of East African conditions, where such regional arrangements may be suitable, especially as the British colonies in this area are contiguous. But in West Africa, where the four British colonies are separated from one another by French (and other) territories, and the four colonies vary in size so considerably,‡ I am convinced that no efficient grouping will be possible for many years to come. Apart from administrative difficulties, and these are serious, there is the fact that even in each individual colony there is as yet little national feeling. In Nigeria the individual thinks of himself as a member of a tribe and not as a Nigerian. The expression "Gold Coast" is merely a geographical one and there is no Gold Coast nation. And certainly there is no feeling of unity among British West Africans, although sometimes

* See p. 23.

† I realise that this may be thought inconsistent with what I have said above regarding the amalgamation of the West Indies, but the communities in these islands are much smaller than in Africa and cannot be governed efficiently in such small units.

		Area in sq. miles	Population
‡ Nigeria	..	372,674	22,000,000
Gold Coast	..	91,843	3,962,000
Sierra Leone	..	27,925	1,729,000
Gambia	..	4,068	237,000

(but by no means always) the interests of the inhabitants of the four colonies may be the same. This fact emerged very clearly in the objections raised in 1945-46 against the establishment of a single university for West Africa.*

In the end, by their reasonable and businesslike attitude in a difficult situation, the people of the Gold Coast won their point in obtaining from the Secretary of State approval for a separate university for the Gold Coast, for which, however, they will have to pay very largely themselves. While I agree with the minority of the Commissioners who reported† on the question of higher education in West Africa that there are many advantages in having only one university in West Africa (to be situated in Nigeria) there is no doubt in my mind that such an arrangement is today politically and practically impossible. The Gold Coast already has in the "university courses" at Achimota the foundations of a university; the West African university at Ibadan exists only on paper.

The West African Governors' Conference which was established in August, 1939, and later became the Civil Members' Committee of the West African War Council set up by Lord Swinton, never had a chance to get into its stride before war broke out; after the war it was revived, as the West African Council, under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who‡ presided over the first meeting, at Accra, in January, 1946. A permanent Secretariat of the Council ("Ofwac") was established at Accra.

I do not believe that this organisation is as valuable as it is officially said to be but at least it does little harm.§ One of the alleged merits of the arrangement is that it allows of immediate decisions being reached, on the spot, after discussion between the Secretary of State (or his deputy) and the Colonial Governors. This is a fallacy, as

* One group of African students in England pointed out that "there is no such thing as an African nationality. There are perhaps as vital differences between say an Akan and a Yoruba as there are between an Englishman and a Russian. They are of the same colour, it is true, but beneath that colour exist several differences, differences of language, tradition, custom, religion, and aspiration, which cannot be overlooked."

† See Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa (the "Elliott" report), Cmd. 6655 (1945).

‡ Mr. George (now Viscount) Hall.

§ Probably because of the personality of its first Chief Secretary, Sir Gerald Creasy, who has succeeded me as Governor of the Gold Coast.

the Secretary of State cannot (or will not) give a decision until he has consulted his own Colonial Office advisers on his return to England. This is not unreasonable, as the Secretary of State obviously cannot have a full knowledge of all the matters dealt with by the Colonial Office, and must be briefed by his permanent staff; if he is briefed before he comes out to West Africa he should be able to give his decision without leaving England. It would be far better if the Secretary of State were to spend such time as he can spare from his office in travelling around the colonies, and meeting the people, rather than sitting in council in consultation with the Governors.

I am not opposed to consultation between neighbouring colonies, and indeed am a great believer in frequent consultations between the heads of similar departments in West Africa, when problems arise which can only conveniently be dealt with by personal consultation; on such occasions *ad hoc* conferences should be arranged. But I do not believe that "regular" conferences serve any real purpose other than the provision of pleasant "joy-rides" for the delegates; the regular annual or half-yearly conference tends to be merely formal, and there is often an amusingly frantic search at the last moment to find sufficient subjects to make up a respectable agenda for the conference. Much the same thing might be said of the West African Council and other high-level conferences, and few of those who had to attend the frequent War Councils in Accra between 1942 and 1945 would deny that much valuable time was wasted on these occasions.

Lord Swinton was succeeded as Resident Minister in West Africa, for a few months in 1945, by Captain Harold Balfour, afterwards Lord Balfour of Inchrye. During his term of office Captain Balfour caught a large tarpon in the Volta River.

In addition to the Resident Minister's office, there were a number of other organisations which were set up temporarily in the Gold Coast (and other colonies) during the war, some of which were useful, others not so useful. But whether they were useful or not they strained the amenities and resources of the Gold Coast almost to breaking point. As I have already mentioned, Military General Headquarters took over a considerable amount of the accommodation of Achimota College (which they did not finally give up until

1947), and the Resident Minister's office took some more. The Army, besides building camps in various parts of the colony, occupied a number of public buildings and took over for their own use a new civil hospital at Takoradi that had just been completed ; the R.A.F. also took over many buildings, and the Navy needed accommodation at Takoradi. The Americans built a large camp at Accra, close to the airfield, complete with mosquito-proofed cinema and a luxurious officers' club. All these, and other temporary invaders, made demands on bungalow accommodation which compelled civil officers to give up some of their houses and share the remaining ones ; they would not have resented this if they had been satisfied that all of those to whom they had given way were really necessary. Their doubts in some cases were certainly justified. I shall refer later to some of the other difficulties experienced in dealing with these invaders.*

The amount of money spent by the Services, and on account of the American Army, was considerable, and I do not suppose that the people of the Gold Coast ever had so much money to spend as during these years of war ; the trouble was that they had little to spend their money on, as imported goods were in very short supply.

Towards the end of 1943 I went to South Africa to spend my leave, my wife and daughter having preceded me. I was there for three months and enjoyed every moment. I flew from Accra to Leopoldville and Elizabethville in the Belgian Congo, and from the latter place went by train to Victoria Falls (the hotel there is one of the best in southern Africa). It was, unfortunately, very warm and the Falls were not at their best as the Zambesi was low, but even so they were a magnificent sight and much more impressive than Niagara, which I had seen when I visited Canada in 1928. When I entered the Union I was handed a telegram of welcome from the acting Prime Minister, Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, on whom I called at Pretoria. From him, and from all the South African officials whom I met, I received the greatest kindness and consideration. An official car was placed at my disposal during my visit and a tour was arranged for me from Capetown to Port Elizabeth, and from there through the Ciskei and Transkei as far east as Umtata, and then up to Basutoland.

* See p. 259.

Accompanied by my wife and daughter I visited Fort Hare and other educational institutions for Africans, saw the agricultural and anti-erosion work that was being done in the Native Reserves, and met the members of the Bunga, the Council of Chiefs of the Transkei. I formed a very high opinion of the Native Affairs Department and of the work it is doing—with insufficient money. At the same time the general attitude to the “native”* in South Africa came as a shock to me after my West African and West Indian experience. In Basutoland the “native,” who still owns his land, is a more prosperous and a happier man.

At Port Elizabeth and throughout our tour through the Ciskei and Transkei, as in Basutoland, we were most hospitably entertained. There may be racial feeling between Dutch and British in South Africa, but it is not shown to visitors, and from those of Dutch descent as much as from the British we received a friendly welcome and much kindness. We were privileged to meet many interesting people, and our visit to Field Marshal and Mrs. Smuts is a delightful memory. I liked Capetown, where we met some old friends, and it was there that we spent most of my leave.

We returned to Accra, after some days of delay at Elizabethville, and an alarming experience in the air, to find Government House full of guests, the Governors from the other West African colonies assembled for a meeting of the War Council; two hours after our arrival we were entertaining about twenty-four guests at dinner!

As soon as I arrived in the Gold Coast in 1941, I began to study the various problems, social, economic, administrative and political, which faced the Government—and the people. My past experience, especially in Nigeria, was of great value to me, but I soon realised that the Gold Coast presented problems for which Nigerian precedents would be false guides, unless they were adapted to the different conditions.

Within a few months I had made up my mind on two points

* In West Africa we speak of the native inhabitants as Africans. In South Africa they are “natives,” and those of mixed blood are the “coloured.” I found that I was misunderstood in South Africa when I spoke of Africans. Incidentally, some South Africans were amazed, and inclined to be incredulous, when I told them that in the Gold Coast there were African (“native”) Judges.

which I considered of importance. The first was the inclusion of unofficial African members in the Executive Council, and the second was the appointment of Africans to the Administrative Service. As I indicate later in this book,* I am no believer in the Executive Council as an instrument of government, and would like to see it replaced by other organisations, but so long as Executive Councils continue to be part of the colonial system I consider that they should include unofficial members. I have always found such members extremely useful in Executive Councils, and they generally know more about local conditions and the feelings of the people than the "imported" official can possibly know; moreover, the people feel that their interests are represented on the body which is commonly believed, though not always with justification, to be responsible for the government of the colony. In any case, there had long been a feeling in British West Africa that Africans should have a larger share in the government of their country, and, although there was no immediate demand in the Gold Coast for African membership of the Executive Council, I felt that it was better to anticipate this demand. Too often in our colonial history we have waited too long in making these concessions, waited in fact until they were practically forced from us, and given with a reluctance which robbed them of any political value. Too often, also, we have decided in our wisdom that people are not yet fit for responsibility, and that the risk of giving them responsibility is too great. In my view the greater danger lies in excessive caution, and the fear of making mistakes often causes the greatest mistake of all, the mistake of being too late. No people can become fit for responsibility until they have exercised it, and no people can learn political wisdom from text-books. They can only learn from their own experience and from their own mistakes.

Feeling strongly on this point, I pressed the Secretary of State for permission to appoint African unofficals to the Gold Coast Executive Council and, after a first refusal, was successful in getting this permission. The hesitation on the part of the Colonial Office was partly due to fear of possible repercussions in other colonies. The

* See p. 307.

Governor of Nigeria was, however, also anxious to appoint unofficials to his Executive Council, and finally, on the 29th September, 1942, I was able to announce the appointment to the Executive Council of Sir Ofori Atta, K.B.E., Omanhene of Akim Abuakwa,* and Mr. K. A. Korsah, O.B.E., Barrister-at-Law.† The inclusion of these two gentlemen in the Executive Council gave great satisfaction to the African population. I also offered a seat on the Executive Council to Sir Agyeman Prempeh, K.B.E., the Asantehene but he did not feel able to accept the offer, as he feared that he would lose the confidence of his chiefs if he failed to give them an account of the proceedings after each meeting of the Council, which, of course, he could not do. In this matter, which involved a breach of local tradition, Sir Ofori Atta took a more courageous decision. A chief in the Gold Coast is not permitted by native custom to interview an official or be present at any meeting unless he is accompanied by at least one attendant, and prior to his appointment to the Executive Council Sir Ofori Atta never came alone to see me in my office. On each occasion he was accompanied by his "soul," a young boy, who squatted on the floor behind Sir Ofori Atta's chair throughout the interview. As we spoke in English I doubt whether the "soul" understood a word of the conversation, but I had to make it plain to Sir Ofori that he would have to come alone to the meetings of the Executive Council and this he readily agreed to do.

While two Africans only were appointed to the Gold Coast Executive Council, in Nigeria two Africans and one European unofficial were appointed, and my decision not to include European unofficials in the Gold Coast Council occasioned some comment. My reason was that it was impossible to find a suitable representative European. The members of the mining community lived too far from Accra for one of them to come regularly to meetings; the agents of the commercial firms were agents and nothing more, and there was no independent European of sufficient standing to warrant

* He had been Omanhene for over thirty years, and a member of Legislative Council since 1916. He had visited England and was a well-known and prominent personality, a born orator, and a man of great ability.

† Afterwards a Puisne Judge of the Gold Coast and C.B.E. Mr. Korsah was a member of the Elliott Commission on Higher Education in British West Africa.

his selection. It is greatly to be regretted that the commercial firms do not allow their representatives in West Africa greater authority ; it is impossible to conduct a large business in Africa from a London or a Liverpool office and expect the local agent, who has no real authority, and no authority at all to speak on behalf of his firm without prior reference to the head office, to be treated as a responsible representative.

There was less difficulty in securing from the Secretary of State approval for the appointment of African Administrative Officers. For some time past a few Africans had held posts in the Secretariat, which is a branch of the Administrative Service ; these were men who had started as clerks and by good work and ability in office routine had worked their way up and been appointed Assistant Colonial Secretaries rather late in life. It was my purpose to appoint young Africans of good education to the Administrative Service, for duty in the Districts, and I was able to find two men with university degrees and other suitable qualifications, who were appointed as Cadets in September, 1942, and posted as Assistant District Commissioners. Others have subsequently been appointed.

I applied the same principle in selecting men from the clerical staff in the various departments for appointment to senior posts. In the past it had been the custom to select good clerks, with long and unblemished records, for promotion to these so-called "European" posts. They were, as a rule, too old to assume a responsibility for which their previous clerical training had not fitted them, and their age prevented them from hoping for any further advancement. My proposal to select younger men for these higher appointments was at first resented, as it undoubtedly deprived worthy clerks of the prizes to which they had previously looked forward as a reward for faithful service in the lower ranks. But I was able in the end to convince local opinion that my proposal was in the best interests of the Africans themselves and that aged clerks, however worthy, were not really fitted for executive responsibilities.

At the same time I arranged for three scholarships a year to be provided for promising youths in the Government Service who possessed educational qualifications sufficient to admit them to British universities. These men were selected from clerks below the age of

26 and sent at Government expense to take degree courses at Oxford, Cambridge, and other universities. Again, my action in confining these selections to men already in the Government Service was at first resented, but I am convinced that it was right. What is needed for the higher ranks of the Civil Service is not academic distinction alone : there must also be some promise of administrative ability and the will to work, and this could only be proved, under local conditions, by experience of the men's work in Government offices.

Apart from these, a large number of scholarships to universities and training centres in Great Britain were provided by the Government,* in addition to the numerous scholarships provided at Achimota College. This College (the correct name is The Prince of Wales' School and College), which was opened in 1927, owes its existence to the vision of Sir Gordon Guggisberg, one of the greatest Governors of the Gold Coast (1919-1927). He intended it to be at first a secondary school and a training school for teachers, but he made it clear that he expected it to become "the stepping-stone towards the university which it is the ardent desire of the African to have." In the first instance it included kindergarten and primary departments to which children (boys and girls) from four years upwards were admitted. It is probable that this was contrary to the intentions of Sir Gordon Guggisberg, but the first Principal of the College felt, perhaps rightly at the time, that the early training of most African students was inadequate to equip them for more advanced studies. In any case, the result was that a large proportion of the students at Achimota were in the lower classes and that the "university courses" were insufficient.† Both the primary and kindergarten departments were abolished in 1944 and in spite of a

* There were over 150 Gold Coast students in Great Britain in 1947 holding Government scholarships.

† The numbers in 1944 were :

Kindergarten	..	..	21
Primary	..	..	102
Secondary	..	..	228
Teacher training	..	..	112
Special courses	..	..	38
"University courses"	..	..	95
Total	..	..	<u>597</u>

limited amount of Press opposition I believe that the decision was the right one.

There is no doubt that Achimota has done a great deal of good in the Gold Coast. It has raised the general standard of education and has turned out a number of useful citizens, fit, as Sir Gordon Guggisberg hoped, to become leaders "in thought, in the professions, or in industry," among their fellow-countrymen. It has also done much towards improving relations between Europeans and Africans. There were a number of Europeans (and some Africans) who regarded Achimota as a mistake when it was first proposed; I doubt whether many would subscribe to that view today. I have never met the first Principal of Achimota College, but from what I have heard of him I am inclined to think that he and I would have disagreed on many points; I am bound to admit, however, that the foundations he laid were good ones. I was indeed fortunate in knowing the Reverend R. W. Stopford when he was Principal, and a more delightful and helpful colleague could not have been hoped for. He did a great deal to restore my confidence in the staff at Achimota, a confidence which was severely shaken when I found that no less than nine of the members of that staff, when I arrived in the colony in 1941, were conscientious objectors. A few people with unusual ideas do no great harm to an educational establishment such as Achimota, and in fact may be useful in preventing undue complacency, but it is unfair to African youth to expose it to the teaching of so many of this type at one time; I am glad to think that under the sane leadership of Mr. Stopford a more healthy outlook was created among the Achimota staff and this was not the least of the services he rendered to the Gold Coast.

I had not been long in the Gold Coast before I realised that the organisation of the Native Courts, and of the Native Administrations in the Colony,* needed a radical overhaul. African opinion is notoriously conservative, and any suggestion of change was bound to cause suspicion, while the claims of the chiefs to certain "inherent rights" of administration had, in the past, prevented desirable improvements in the system. The Government had never acknowledged that these "inherent rights" prevented the exercise by the

* That is, the Gold Coast Colony, and not Ashanti and the Northern Territories.

Crown of its constitutional functions, but in practice had never pressed the point. These "inherent rights" were said to remain in virtue of the fact that the Gold Coast Colony, unlike Ashanti, had never been conquered, and that the relations between the British Government and the chiefs and people of the Colony were based on treaties. The principal of these was the so-called "Bond" of 1844, an Agreement signed at Cape Coast Castle by the British Lieutenant-Governor and nine Fanti chiefs.* Whatever the value of these "inherent rights" may have been, the fact remains that the British Government had for many decades exercised an actual control over the Gold Coast Colony, and had protected the people of the Colony from otherwise certain annexation by the Ashantis, and the British administration of the Gold Coast could not continue indefinitely to tolerate obvious abuses out of undue respect for the somewhat shadowy "inherent rights" of the chiefs.

I was convinced that the better course was to seek the willing acceptance of reforms even if the reforms were not as complete as I could have wished. With this end in view, and feeling that the reform of the Native tribunals was the most pressing need, I appointed a committee, in December, 1942, consisting of five Africans and two European officials, to consider the constitution, jurisdiction, and procedure of Native tribunals. This committee produced within a few months an admirable report, recommending a number of reforms, of which the most important were the grading of the Native Courts and the limitation of the powers of the Courts of each grade; the relieving of Paramount Chiefs of their judicial functions as members of the Courts; the reduction in the number of judges sitting in each Court; the payment of all fines and fees of the

* See p. 181. The Agreement was as follows:

(1) Whereas power and jurisdiction have been exercised for and on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, within divers countries and places adjacent to Her Majesty's forts and settlements on the Gold Coast, we, chiefs of countries and places so referred to, adjacent to the said forts and settlements, do hereby acknowledge that power and jurisdiction, and declare that the first objects of law are the protection of individuals and of property.

(2) Human sacrifices, and other barbarous customs, such as panyaring, are abominations and contrary to law.

(3) Murders, robberies, and other crimes and offences, will be tried and enquired of before the Queen's judicial officers and the chiefs of the district, moulding the customs of the country to the general principles of British law. (N.B.—"Panyaring" was the giving of children as pledges for a debt.)

Courts into the Native Administration treasuries ; and the appointment of a Judicial Adviser as a "guide, philosopher and friend" to the Native Courts. The Committee also recommended the setting up of a Land Court separate from the Supreme Court.* Nearly all the recommendations of the committee were accepted and given legal force by an Ordinance passed in 1944, the reforms proving acceptable, I am convinced, because they were recommended by a committee containing a majority of African members.

The committee took much evidence which revealed the need for reform. In many cases the members of the tribunals divided among themselves the fees and fines imposed, and as there were always a number of members sitting there was a tendency to impose heavy fines and costs in trivial cases in order that the judges should receive adequate remuneration. Under the new law the number of judges in a Native Court is limited and these receive regular "sitting fees" as remuneration ; all fees and fines are paid into the Native Administration treasury. I closed all Native Courts (including for a time those in Accra) in those places where there was no proper Native Administration treasury and no proper provision for the staffing of the Courts.

In the case of the Native Administrations the matter was not so simple as the red herring of "inherent rights" was certain to be drawn across the path of reform. But the need for reform was no less urgent than in the case of the Native tribunals. The sixty-three States of the Colony varied in size from that of Akim Abuakwa, with a population of over 150,000, to Hemang, with a population of only 830,† although the Paramount Chief of each State was held to be of equal rank and to have equal powers. The degree of efficiency of the administration also varied enormously from State to State ; some were comparatively well run, others were hardly run at all. Native Administration treasuries had been started in a few States, but in many of them all the revenues of the State went into the pockets of the chief and his immediate supporters and were never properly accounted for. In some cases, especially where gold and diamond mines were within State boundaries, the revenues were

* A Lands Division of the Supreme Court was, in fact, set up.

† Sixteen of the States have populations of less than 5,000.

considerable. The scramble for these revenues (and also, to some extent, for the honour and glory of chieftainship) led to numerous and protracted "Stool disputes" in which the supporters of rival claimants to the Stool frequently came to blows and many persons were killed.* Apart from these disorders, the disputes retarded generally the progress of the country and were a hindrance to development. As I pointed out in a speech to the Legislative Council in September, 1942, during the previous ten years no less than 22 Paramount Chiefs had been "destooled," in addition to 22 others who had abdicated, generally to forestall destoolment. Seven Stools of Paramount Chiefs were then vacant, and in many States no Paramount Chief had succeeded in maintaining his place on the Stool for more than a very short time. In the case of subordinate chiefs the position was even worse. Time, energy and money, were wasted on these disputes, and it was obviously impossible for Indirect Rule, which was in accordance with the avowed policy of the Government, to flourish under such conditions. The real trouble lay in the fact that the Government had insufficient power under the then existing law to control the situation and that the Government's decision to recognise one of the contending claimants to a Stool would not be accepted by the other candidates. Time and again Government's offer to arbitrate in one of these disputes has been accepted by both parties, with the result that the decision was rejected by the losing side as soon as it was made. Attempts to strengthen the hand of Government in the matter had met with opposition in the past and had been abandoned, but I felt that the issue must be faced if Indirect Rule, or indeed any kind of rule, were to be substituted for the existing anarchy.

In these circumstances I appointed a small committee of two European officials and two Africans, one of whom was Mr. K. A. Korsah and the other Sir Ofori Atta, who had been the proponent of the existing Native Administration Ordinance, the Ordinance which I considered ineffective, to consider the matter and report. I made it clear that I did not wish to interfere with the right of the people to elect their chiefs, as they had always done, in accordance with Native custom, but that I must have the necessary powers to

* See p. 257.

appoint the Native Authorities who were responsible for local government in the various States, and to control their actions when necessary. To Native Authorities so reformed I was prepared to give considerable powers, exceeding those which the chiefs possessed under Native custom. The committee did its work well, and in due course a new Native Authority Ordinance was passed, more or less on the lines I wanted ; it was supported by the chiefs and opposed only by the Municipal Members of Legislative Council and a handful of rather ineffective politicians outside the Council. It is a great pity that Sir Ofori Atta did not live to see this new Ordinance become law ; he contributed a great deal to its drafting, agreeing, with a generosity that only great men are capable of, that the older law of which he was the real "father" was not suitable for modern conditions. In our discussions on the subject we agreed to differ on the question of "inherent rights," and to satisfy some of his scruples I consented to a title and preamble to the new Ordinance which sought to set out the facts of the case.* We were all anxious to avoid the use of the word "Native" in the title of the Ordinance and of the authorities set up under it, but we were unable to find a more acceptable term. The term "Local Authority," considered as a possible alternative, was rejected on account of the different meaning attached to it in England, but it is a fact, and one that is often over-

* The title and preamble of the Ordinance ran as follows :

AN ORDINANCE more effectively to secure to Native Authorities their due place in the administration of the Colony and to prescribe their powers and duties, and to assign certain functions to Provincial Councils, and for purposes connected therewith.

WHEREAS by Letters Patent passed under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom and bearing date the 23rd day of May, 1925, the office of Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Gold Coast Colony is constituted and provision for the Government of the said Colony is made :

AND WHEREAS Paramount and other Chiefs of the various States and other areas into which the said Colony is divided are from time to time elected and installed in accordance with native customary law :

AND WHEREAS by the Native Administration (Colony) Ordinance provision is made regulating the exercise of certain powers and jurisdictions by such Chiefs within the said Colony :

AND WHEREAS the provision so made as aforesaid by the Native Administration (Colony) Ordinance has now become inadequate to secure to such Chiefs their due place in the administration of the said Colony :

AND WHEREAS it is expedient that other provision be now made whereby such Chiefs may be enabled to take an effective part in the administration of the said Colony :

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED, etc.

looked, that the Native Authority is the Local Authority, and the only possible local authority in the areas for which it is responsible outside of the municipal areas.

Under the new law the election of the chiefs is left to the people, as it always has been, and always must be for so long as the chiefs remain responsible for priestly as well as civil functions. But the chief is not necessarily the Native Authority recognised by the Governor, although as a rule the Governor willingly recognises the chief *and his State Council** as the Native Authority. When the people themselves cannot agree as to the election of a chief, or where the chief and his council prove incompetent to perform the functions of a Native Authority, the Governor has power, under the new law, to appoint other persons as the Native Authority. It is, therefore, no longer possible for a handful of malcontents to paralyse the activities of a State, nor is it possible under the new procedure for a Stool dispute to drag wearily on, for years and years, to the impoverishment of the State and the stopping of all progress. The new law is of course distasteful to those who for years had prospered through fishing in the muddy waters of Stool intrigues, but I believe that it is popular with the majority of the people and will work for their betterment. It has already resulted in Native Authorities being set up in several States where none had been able to function for many years past.

While these matters affecting the welfare of the people of the country were under consideration, I was also engaged in the reform of municipal administration. I am a believer in Indirect Rule (under proper safeguards such as are now available in the Gold Coast) for those people who still retain a tribal organisation and a traditional reverence for their chiefs and customs, and I believe that for such people there is no better school in which they can learn the art of self-government. But for those who have left the tribal stage and to a certain degree adopted European culture the clock cannot be set back and their road to self-government lies, in my opinion, through municipal administration. In the Gold Coast, when I arrived there, there were three towns, Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi, which

* Native Administration in the Gold Coast has always been more democratic than in Nigeria, where even now, in many cases, the Chief alone is the Native Authority.

enjoyed a form of municipal government, but in each case a majority of the members of the Town Council were Government members, nominated by the Governor. In effect, therefore, the municipalities were little more than Government departments, as the elected members had no real power (and consequently no sense of responsibility). For Kumasi there was a Public Health Board which was largely official and almost entirely European, and this Board had done excellent work, making of Kumasi a really well-laid-out town which is a model to other towns in West Africa. But whatever the merits of such paternal municipal administration may be, it does not in fact serve as a training ground for self-government and this I considered essential, even at the risk of a lower degree of efficiency while the lesson was being learnt. Moreover, I am quite sure that sooner or later the demand for responsible municipal government would prove too strong to be resisted, and I preferred to anticipate the demand rather than wait for it.

With the approval of the Secretary of State I therefore enacted an Ordinance providing for a Town Council in Kumasi, with a majority of elected members, and provision for the nomination of a minority of members by the Governor, the Asantehene, and the Kumasi Chamber of Commerce. For the time being, and until the Governor authorised the Council to elect its President, the President of the Council was to be an official appointed by the Governor. The law gave the Governor responsibility for approving the annual estimates of expenditure of the Council, the appointment and dismissal of senior staff, and the imposition of rates, a similar control (as I pointed out at the time) to that exercised by the Secretary of State for the Colonies over the activities of the Governor. The franchise was extended to all adults who owned or rented a room in the township. This new arrangement, which represented a substantial advance towards municipal self-government, was warmly welcomed by the people, to whom it came as a pleasant surprise.

I had selected Kumasi as the first town in the Gold Coast* to ascend the municipal ladder because it lay in Ashanti, and under the constitution then existing the laws for Ashanti were enacted by the Governor and could more speedily be placed on the statute book.

* It was, in fact, the first in British West Africa.

But as soon as possible thereafter similar municipal Councils were set up for Accra, Cape Coast, and the combined township of Sekondi and Takoradi. It was my policy to interfere as little as possible with the working of these Town Councils and merely to hold my powers in reserve as a check on any abuses that might arise. I did not and do not now look for perfection in municipal government in the Gold Coast (corruption is not unknown in more advanced countries), but I am convinced that the people will learn in time to conduct their own affairs with probity and efficiency and that they can only learn by experience. I hope that if municipal scandals occur in the future these will not be taken as proof that the people are not yet fitted for municipal self-government, as happened some years ago in another colony. The electors are going to make mistakes in electing the wrong type of people to the municipal Councils, and the members of the Councils are going to make many mistakes in the exercise of their authority, but they will learn from these mistakes, and unless we are prepared to take the risk of having mistakes made we will never succeed in our avowed intention of leading the Gold Coast Africans along the road to complete self-government.

It is proof of the reasonable attitude of the Gold Coast people, unfortunately not shared by the people of some other colonies, that they accepted without demur the slight measure of control which I thought it necessary to retain over the powers of the Town Councils, and that they made no request for the immediate election of the Presidents of these Councils. In the same reasonable spirit they accepted the new Constitution of 1946 to which I refer in Chapter IX. For such people I believe that there is a bright future. I felt at all times while I was in the Gold Coast that the people could be trusted, that their good sense would prevent them from following irresponsible leaders for more than a short while, and that their natural leaders, the Chiefs, could be depended on. Never once was my confidence betrayed.*

With an intelligent and reasonable people, and a good revenue†

* The recent incidents in the Gold Coast have not shaken my confidence *in the people*, who "were led by evil counsellors—the Lord shall deal with them."

† The revenue in 1946-1947 was £7,567,000. Of this, £2,461,000 came from import duties, £615,000 from duties and royalties on minerals, and £1,818,000 from income tax; regarding income tax, see p. 290.

from its trade and mineral products, there is every reason for expecting rapid progress in the Gold Coast. I was unfortunate in that most of my term of office in that colony coincided with the war and the post-war period of shortages. Buildings of all sorts—hospitals, schools, offices, and dwelling houses—were urgently required, but building materials were almost unprocurable and outrageously expensive. More serious, however, was the shortage of staff, both administrative and technical, which prevented development, and, indeed, in some cases, even delayed planning. I cannot blame my predecessor who, in 1940, when the war was at its most serious stage, seconded a number of civil officials to the armed forces, but many of these seconded men were retained in the Army when the situation from the military point of view had ceased to be serious, and the need of the civil administration was acute,* and I do feel that the needs of the Colonial Empire were not sufficiently considered. The Colonial Office itself was desperately short of staff, and men were borrowed from the colonies to fill some of the gaps. In another Chapter† I refer to the apparent ease with which the temporary war departments found staff, while we struggled along with a fraction of the approved strength in each department, with men doing long tours of service in spite of failing health (and many deaths), separated from their wives owing to the difficulty of transport, finding it difficult on account of this separation and the rising costs of living to make ends meet, but nevertheless undertaking the additional work imposed by the war in a spirit which has never been adequately recognised.

All this time only a trifling number of recruits were obtained for the Gold Coast Service, although when I went to England in 1944 for a short official visit of 17 days, I managed by my personal exertions and a direct approach to the

* Even from the point of view of the war effort of the colony, in the raising of recruits for the army and the production of rubber and foodstuffs, it was a short-sighted policy to allow the number of District Commissioners to drop below the minimum required for the efficient staffing of all districts; yet in spite of my repeated representations on the subject, several of my officers were taken from me for duty in the Colonial Office or for civil duties elsewhere, in addition to those on military duty.

† See p. 259.

Ministry of Labour, to recruit nine men for temporary duty in the Gold Coast. I am convinced that if the Colonial Office had discarded its usual procedure in recognition of the fact that a somewhat serious crisis had arisen, and had tackled the Ministry of Labour in a determined manner, the colonies would not have been placed in the disastrous position as regards staff, which held up essential work and made all our much-advertised development schemes into the hollow pretences that they actually were. Even after the war ended it was months and months before recruits began to arrive in any numbers in the colonies. The result of this was that when the Gold Coast troops came home from Burma and were demobilised in 1946, we were so short of staff that we could not deal adequately with the many problems that arose, and were unable to start on the planned development works which would have provided occupation for thousands of demobilised soldiers. It is greatly to the credit of the few civil servants available, no less than to the ex-service men themselves (and of course to the local military authorities), that demobilisation in the Gold Coast proceeded so smoothly.

Overwork and overstrain, and a belief that their financial and other difficulties were not receiving sympathetic consideration, led to much discontent among the European members of the Civil Service,* who nevertheless continued to perform their duties with their usual loyalty and efficiency. So convinced was I that the conditions of service for both European and African officers needed a complete overhaul that I made repeated representations to this effect, for over two years, without result. Similar representations were made by other West African governors. The Secretary of State agreed that an enquiry should be made but was unable to find a suitable officer to carry out this enquiry.† At last, during my leave in England in 1945, feeling that no results would otherwise be obtained, I reluctantly offered to second the Chief Justice of the Gold Coast, Sir Walter Harragin, for this service; the other governors concerned having agreed, the Secretary of State also approved.

* In the *Report of the Commission on the Civil Services of British West Africa, 1945-46*, Sir Walter Harragin wrote: "The Service generally is in an unhappy state. Officers believe themselves to have been unjustly treated. They allege that for years their just demands for a cost-of-living allowance were rejected . . . It was interesting to note that the blame was placed upon the Secretary of State and not the local Government for the failure to redress their grievances earlier." (Paragraphs 10 and 12.)

† The Civil Service did not fail to notice that it was possible to find fourteen persons to serve on the Higher Education Commission which visited West Africa, but impossible to find one man to conduct an enquiry into their conditions of service. One of the unfortunate results of the delay was that the awards had to be ante-dated and arrears of salaries paid. This established an unfortunate precedent which has caused much trouble since.

CHAPTER IX

THE GOLD COAST (*continued*)

ALL FOUR West African governors being in England in October, 1945, we determined to ask for an interview with the Secretary of State (Mr., afterwards Viscount, Hall), as we considered it our duty to inform him of the serious view we took of the long delays in connection with staff and other matters, which we felt were affecting the morale of the Public Service and breeding discontent among the West African peoples. We were unable to obtain an interview until two weeks later, by which time two of the governors had returned to West Africa. It was left to Sir Hubert Stevenson and myself to speak on behalf of all and, as we feared from the start, we achieved nothing from our interview, except, speaking for myself, a deep sense of frustration.

The position was the more disheartening because there was so much that ought to be done, and could have been done if the staff had been there. A strong financial reserve had been built up before the war, and in my view some of the money in that reserve might well have been spent on social services. There was now no chance to spend it, although the needs of the country had grown considerably. I consider that the old policy of building up reserves in colonies instead of investing the money in developments, economic and social, was a thoroughly bad one. In the long run it did not even pay, as the British taxpayer had in the end to foot the bill for developments. Safety first, as usual, proved the most expensive policy.

The most pressing need of the people was for economic development, for economic freedom is an essential preliminary to political independence. The African, and especially the African woman, is essentially a trader, and everywhere in West Africa the petty traders swarm. Along every street in every town may be seen the stalls of the small traders, or small heaps of peppers, groundnuts, and other foodstuffs, on trays, waiting for the passing customer. The turnover

in money may not be very great, but the wayside stall is also the people's club, and endless conversation whiles away the time between sales. The sales themselves are not effected without long-drawn-out arguments and bargaining, which are regarded as part of the fun. The money of the ignorant visitor, who pays the price asked for in the first instance by the trader, is accepted as a windfall, but there is a feeling that he is a kill-joy (as well as a fool). In those West African towns where there are pavements these pavements are, as a rule, covered by the booths of traders, while the African walks in the middle of the street, to the grave risk of life and limb and the irritation of motor drivers.

But in spite of the popularity of "small" trading, the African seldom succeeds in business on a larger scale. This is partly due to the competition of Syrian* traders, who are better business men than the Africans, and can live as cheaply. But it is also largely due to the African's constitutional inability to stick to a job, to persevere in hard work, or to trust his fellow African. It is most unusual for Africans to combine to form a company and to build up a business; jealousy and distrust are strong handicaps. When I first went to Nigeria in 1912 there were several African merchants who traded on a large scale and were wealthy men; one of them was for a time President of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce, a Chamber composed almost entirely of the Agents of European business houses. Today the African merchant of any standing is very seldom met with. It is, of course, natural for the African to blame his Syrian and European competitors for his own lack of success in business, but he knows well enough in his own heart where the blame really lies.†

It is, however, the duty of the government to help the African, and for this reason I obtained the services of an economic expert as my adviser; unfortunately his health did not permit him to stay long in the Gold Coast, and it was not possible to replace him for some time. However, in 1947, a few months before I left the Gold Coast, an experienced officer was appointed to the post of Secretary for

* Many of the so-called Syrians in West Africa come from the Lebanon.

† It has been suggested to me (not by a European) that the reason why the Africans cannot succeed at big business, in spite of their skill as small traders, is that when the business is a small one it can be managed by the owner himself; as soon as it gets too large to be a one-man business, the owner is robbed by his employees.

Commerce and Industry, and I hope that it will be possible for him to do something to improve the African's economic position. Perhaps the best chance for the African lies in co-operation and with this in mind I set up a separate Co-operation Department (Co-operation had previously formed a branch of the Agricultural Department); the lack of trained staff, however, proved a severe handicap, and it may be some time before the co-operative movement in the Gold Coast is fully developed.

Apart from the mining industry, which could only be handled efficiently by large European companies, the future of the country depended mainly on the production of cocoa. For many years before the last war the purchase of cocoa from the farmers had been effected, for the most part, through African "brokers" or middlemen, by European firms, and there had been considerable competition in buying, which was of benefit to the producers. In 1937, however, the European firms* purchasing cocoa in the Gold Coast and Nigeria signed an agreement among themselves "for the purpose of eliminating harmful competition," which in effect meant a reduction of the price paid to the farmers for their cocoa. The action of the "Pool," as it came to be styled, was strongly resented by the Africans, and in retaliation they decided on a hold-up of all cocoa sales and a boycott of European goods in the shops. The hold-up and boycott continued for some months, and in the meantime a Commission of Enquiry was appointed. In its report† the Commission made it clear that the Gold Coast Government, in maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality in the dispute, had acted correctly. The firms considered that the local Government had failed to support them, and in fact alleged that "the attitude of the Gold Coast Government . . . was more conducive than any other single factor to the prolonged and general hold-up of cocoa," but the Commission expressed the opinion that "the local Government acted throughout with tact and that credit is due to Sir Arnold Hodson and his officers for their handling of a very difficult situation." The Commission also pointed out that the Colonial Office was aware of the firms' proposed

* With the exception of the English and Scottish Joint Co-operative Wholesale Society, Limited.

† Cmd. 5845 (1938).

Agreement and offered no opposition to it. There is no doubt that the European firms counted on the support of the Colonial Office as against the local Government, whose failure to take sides with them against the African they so strongly resented. I mention this because a few years later they again attempted to enlist the support of "higher authority" against my refusal to take sides. To some extent they succeeded, but as I would not give way this did no harm.

The Commission advised the setting up in the Gold Coast of a statutory organisation of cocoa producers for the marketing of cocoa, and these proposals were still under consideration when war broke out, and an alternative temporary war scheme had to be adopted. Under this scheme the Government purchased all cocoa produced at fixed prices, and in spite of the fact that much cocoa had to be burnt* because of the shortage of transport, the profits on the handling of the cocoa were considerable, and the British Government, in accordance with a promise generously given at the beginning of the war, made these profits available to the colonies† concerned for the benefit of the cocoa industry.

In 1947 the Legislative Council passed an Ordinance to establish a Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board and to provide for the regulation and control of the marketing and export of cocoa. This Board has at its disposal the profits referred to above, a large sum‡ which will provide a stabilisation fund to regulate the prices paid for cocoa in the future. This was the implementation of the policy announced by His Majesty's Government,§ a policy attacked by interested parties in this country and across the Atlantic who saw more chance of profit for themselves under the unregulated system of marketing which obtained in the past. Under such a system the unfortunate African producer of agricultural products was at the mercy of big business and interested middlemen, and the fluctuations of the world markets, which he could not understand, always appeared to work to his disadvantage. Under the new system the Gold Coast Marketing Board announces before the beginning of each season the

* 141,000 tons of cocoa were destroyed in the Gold Coast.

† Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and the Cameroons under French Mandate.

‡ Probably exceeding £25,000,000.

§ See Cmd. 6950.

price that it will pay throughout the season for cocoa produced in the colony ; no other purchaser will be allowed to compete. With the world price for cocoa very high at present, the Board is on a good wicket and can offer good prices^{*}; the test of the ability of the Board will come later when it has to face the inevitable slump in world prices. No doubt the Board[†] will make mistakes but I am confident that the good sense of all concerned will ensure its success in the long run. A similar system, with a stabilisation fund for *all* important colonial primary products, would be the saving of the colonies.

A strange disease, known as "swollen shoot," has within recent years been discovered to be a serious threat to the future of the cocoa industry, as it kills the cocoa trees and spreads rapidly through the plantations. In 1944 a special Research Institute was set up with its headquarters in the Gold Coast, to investigate the causes of this and other diseases which affect cocoa, and to seek remedies. This West African Cocoa Research Institute is financed mainly by funds obtained from the profits on the sales of cocoa during the war.

While plans for the improvement of the economic position of the country were being formulated and considered, the need for social improvements was not overlooked. It was obvious that good and hard work could not be expected from an under-nourished and unhealthy population, and plans were prepared for better hospitals and health measures, for rehousing the people and eliminating the slums in the larger towns, and for improving water supplies. In addition to schemes for water supplies (and electric lighting) in those towns which had not these amenities, a special Department was set up to provide water in rural areas. The needs of the smaller villages and of the country-dwellers generally was desperate, especially in the Northern Territories, where the water available in the rainy season was allowed to run to waste and serious droughts followed a few months later. On the large plains near Accra, also, there was a great need of water, the lack of which prevented the utilisation of these plains for the raising of stock on a large scale. I feel very

* The price for the 1947-48 season is 40s. the load of 60 lb. The average price paid for cocoa in the Gold Coast in 1938-39 was 6s. 10d. the load.

† The Board as at present constituted consists of an official member as chairman, with a casting vote, five other Europeans and six Africans.

strongly that the most essential need of the people in the colonies is for a sufficient supply of potable water. This is very obvious to those who have travelled through a country such as the Northern Territories towards the end of the dry season and seen the sufferings of man and beast on this account.

Next in importance to water I put the need for better housing. The majority of the people in the Gold Coast, both in the rural areas and in the towns, live in mud houses, the roofs being thatched or covered with corrugated iron (an abomination to the eye). A mud house in itself is not a bad dwelling if it is properly built and I have lived in many and found them cool and comfortable. But as the African never appreciates the need for making small repairs as they become necessary, the houses slowly but surely deteriorate until they become uninhabitable. They are, moreover, always overcrowded, adults and children sleeping in the same rooms in unconcerned promiscuity. In the rural areas the housing is bad but as there is plenty of space the conditions are not as unhealthy as they would otherwise be. In the towns the situation is more serious. Here the tumble-down shacks of the poorer classes are huddled together in such a way that little air can reach the inmates (even if, contrary to the usual African practice, they kept their windows open). The houses are small and badly built, and even when they are not too small for the owner's or tenant's family, rooms, and even portions of rooms, are let off to other tenants.

After the earthquake which destroyed a number of houses in Accra in 1939, and made thousands homeless (fortunately only sixteen were killed), the Government built a number of houses and labourers' rooms in well-laid-out and healthy estates on the outskirts of the town. The houses were taken by persons of the salaried classes, on the hire-purchase system, with payments spaced over thirty years, the rate of interest charged being very low. In the case of the labourers' rooms, on the other hand, it was never intended that the rent should cover the cost of their construction, and the amounts charged were non-economic. Later on, when staff and materials became available, this policy was extended to other towns. The houses are good and sufficiently commodious, and the labourers' rooms, though not luxurious, are substantially built and kept in good

repair with adequate water and sanitary arrangements provided for each group of rooms. The demand for the rooms is sufficient proof that they are far superior to any other accommodation that could be procured at a comparable rent; the rent charged by most of the private landlords in the Gold Coast towns can only be described as rapacious. It is impossible yet to sweep away the slums that still exist, because there is nowhere else for the slum dwellers to go, but I hope that when sufficient accommodation has been provided in the Government housing estates the present slums will be ruthlessly destroyed.

The re-housing programme was placed under the control of a Social Welfare Department which I set up in 1943, the other functions of which included a probation service, the maintenance of remand homes and hostels, the control of the "approved" school to which refractory boys were sent, and the organisation of social and community centres. This was a new departure in Government departments and it suffered at first from inexperience, but I am convinced that a department of this sort is essential in each colony to organise and co-ordinate the social welfare activities of Government, which in the past have too often been left to the spasmodic enthusiasms of individuals who could spare the time for them. As most of these enthusiasts are only temporary dwellers in the colonies, and few of the local people have the energy or perseverance to carry on the work, or the desire to give their services for the benefit of others, many schemes for social welfare in the colonies have perished after a few years, when the driving force of the individual organiser has disappeared.

In some colonies the Boy Scouts (and Girl Guides) suffer from this lack of continuity. Perhaps well organised at the start by someone with a real knowledge of Scouting and a keen desire to establish its principles, the local organisation subsequently misses the guiding hand and the true idea of Scouting becomes lost. In its place there is much marching to and fro in uniform, and rather too much advertisement of Scouts and Scoutmasters.

As I have said above,* I believe that games can do more than most things to bring the races together. The Africans in Accra had a

* See p. 59.

very good tennis club, organised and practically managed by a barrister, who, at the age of 77, was still playing in tennis tournaments. He was largely responsible for the high standard of play and the good court manners of the Africans at Accra. It was a pleasure to play, as I and other Europeans used to do, in the well-run tournaments at this club; Africans also entered, and won many events, in the tournaments at the European tennis club. I am sure that these friendly games had much to do with the good feeling that existed between the races in the Gold Coast, a better feeling than existed in any other colony that I have known. This fact has been remarked on by many visitors.* I do not mean to suggest that racial prejudice did not exist in the Gold Coast; unfortunately it exists everywhere, but its most unpleasant manifestations were certainly absent from this colony.

The most popular form of amusement among the literate Gold Coast Africans is, unfortunately, dancing; not the traditional African dancing but the dancing of the ballroom. On this form of entertainment, and on the evening dress which they think must go with it, clerks and others with small incomes will spend money without hesitation which could have been spent to better purpose—or saved. There is one particular dance known as “High Life,” of which I had never heard until I came to the Gold Coast, which is particularly popular; it was once described as a kind of jitter-bugging, and I can think of no better description. It is asked for on every possible occasion, and I believe that any Gold Coast audience would prefer the music of “High Life” to the masterpieces of the best composers.

In the Gold Coast there is a higher proportion of really educated persons than in any other African colony, but it is a mistake to assume from the existence of a number of English-speaking professional men, and from other evidences of civilisation, that the civilisation of the country is in any way complete. Such is very far from being the case. In spite of African judges and barristers,

* “In no other territory visited was co-operation between the government and missions so close, nor did we anywhere else meet Africans with a greater sense of public service, or find such free and natural professional and social contacts between Africans and Europeans.” This tribute to the Gold Coast is paid at page 66 of *Africa Advancing*, a study of rural education and agriculture in West Africa and the Belgian Congo, by Jackson Davis, Thomas M. Campbell, and Margaret Wrong (two Americans and a Canadian), which was published in 1945.

wigged and gowned, who quote English law in the courts, these same courts are not free from the influences of "juju." An African magistrate, who has often acted as a judge, is reported* to have said: "I have seen in my court juju-men hired by clients who believed in them, to attend court in the hope that their presence may influence the court." I have heard the same thing from European judges, and one barrister ruefully told me that the juju-men in these cases are often better paid than the lawyers.

In the Northern Territories the practice of "carrying the corpse" has not yet been stamped out. The body of a dead man is carried shoulder high by his friends through the village, and if by chance (or design) the body touches the wall of any house, the owner of that house is adjudged to be responsible for the death and has, at the very least, to pay compensation to the relatives.

The Gold Coast African of the coast, dressed in "European" clothes, does not like to be reminded that in the interior thousands and thousands of Africans wear scarcely any clothes at all. There was much resentment caused by the exhibition of a film (Mamprussi Village) showing semi-naked Africans of the Northern Territories; the fear was that people in other countries seeing this film would think that it showed the general condition of things in the Gold Coast. I think this resentment was ill-judged, as there is no use trying to conceal the fact that *all* Africans are not educated and not Europeanised. There is nothing inherently wrong in nakedness, nor, I may add, is the wearing of European clothes an essential sign of civilisation. As a matter of fact the African man and woman invariably looks better and more dignified in native dress. Worse than anything else, in my opinion, is the wearing of picturesque and tasteful native clothes on the body and a battered "European" felt hat or helmet on the head.

When in the Northern Territories I have seen the people of the Konkomba tribe performing their native dances. The men dance in a large circle, to the music of home-made drums and horns, with a solemn expression on their faces strangely different from the usual smiling countenance which one looks for from the African. They wear head-dresses adorned with the horns of antelopes and the feathers of birds, and many of them wear very little else. They are

* See the *African Morning Post* of the 5th January, 1945.

an unruly people, frequently quarrelling among themselves, often with fatal results, and are a constant worry to their Dagomba overlords. The Dagomba chief that I knew, the Ya Na,* was a venerable old gentleman, much respected by his people, who used a barber's chair as a throne.† The only word of English that he knew was "good-bye," and I found it disconcerting on my first arrival at his town (Yendi) to be greeted by a warm handshake and repeated "good-byes."

I believe that it is most important that Africans should be taught English as far as possible, and as well as possible (i.e., not "pidgin" English). In the past, especially in Northern Nigeria, it was considered a mistake to encourage the speaking of English, and this policy I believe to be largely responsible for the lack of influence of the chiefs of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria over the Africans of the south ; such an influence, if it had existed, might have prevented some of the troubles which have afflicted Nigeria in recent years. In this matter the Gold Coast has been more fortunate, as most of the chiefs in the Colony and in Ashanti can speak English, and their influence is considerable and beneficial.

In the past also, following the Northern Nigeria fashion, the troops of the Royal West African Frontier Force were spoken to by their officers in Hausa, which the officers were required to learn. This was all very well in times of peace, when officers stayed with the West African regiments for comparatively long periods, but in war, when casualties had to be replaced and additional officers were required in consequence of the rapid expansion of the Force, the officers could not be expected to learn Hausa in time to be of much use and the men could not understand instructions (other than the formal drill orders) given to them in English. To General Sir George Giffard, who was Commander-in-Chief in West Africa from 1940 to 1944, is due the credit for insisting that African troops under his command should be taught English.

Accra, the capital of the Gold Coast, is situated almost exactly on the meridian of Greenwich but, with a view to daylight saving, the clocks were put forward by twenty minutes throughout the colony

* Na, in most of the Northern Territories, means chief.

† As a matter of fact, the "throne" of a Northern Territories chief is the skin of some animal, and a chief is said to be "on the skin" in the same way as a Colony or Ashanti chief is "on the Stool".

during certain months of the year. During the war the clocks were advanced another forty minutes, so that our local time throughout the year was an hour ahead of Greenwich mean time. This was unpopular with the Africans, many of whom had to get up in the dark to start their day's work, and it led to many misunderstandings with the R.A.F. and the American troops who used Greenwich mean time. After the war, to the relief I think of everyone, we abandoned daylight saving and adopted Greenwich mean time.

I had always been interested in birds and while in the Gold Coast I was able to establish an interesting aviary at Christiansborg Castle, in which I kept only local birds. (I was once asked by an African whether the birds came from England; it is remarkable how unobservant Africans, other than professional hunters, are, and how little they know of the fauna of their own country.) Among my birds I had some of the Giant Crested Plantain Eaters which were tame enough to follow me about the garden, and Touracos which, when I opened the door of the aviary, would fly to me and perch on my hand. I also had Golden Orioles, Barbets, and a number of other species. Before I left the colony I presented them to the London Zoo. Bannerman's book on the Birds of West Africa is one of the most interesting books I know.

In 1946 I was created a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George. No previous Governor had received this Honour while serving in the Gold Coast and it was regarded by the inhabitants as proof of the increasing status of the colony.

My last year in the Gold Coast was spoilt for me by the unpleasant incidents connected with the so-called "juju murder."* Sir Ofori Atta,† the Omanhene of Akim Abuakwa, died in August, 1943, and was buried with the ceremony that might have been expected at the interment of a great chief.‡ Six months later, in accordance with

* It was so described by several English papers; others referred to it as the "ritual murder." It was, in fact, just murder.

† See pp. 66, 196.

‡ "The funeral of Chiefs and other great men is generally on the grand scale . . . and also in the ancient days human sacrifice was an inseparable part of the funeral ceremonies of kings. Slaves, servants, wives and even court officials were killed to accompany the departed king and form part of his household or court in Asaman (Hades)." See *Akan Laws and Customs*, by J. B. Danquah, p. 238. Dr. Danquah is the person referred to in the footnote at page 238 below.

tradition, the second funeral "custom" was observed, and during the period of the "custom," which was held at Kibi, the headquarters of Akim Abuakwa, some sixty miles from Accra, a minor chief disappeared. This was Akyea Mensah, the Odikro of Apedwa, who had been a great favourite and confidant of Sir Ofori Atta and, it has been suggested, was in fact his eldest (illegitimate) son. A careful search for the missing man brought no result and the rumour that he had been murdered gradually grew. For some time no evidence could be obtained as those who knew the truth were obviously at first afraid to speak, but at last some human remains, believed to be those of Mensah, were found, and witnesses began to come forward. Inquest proceedings were held in September, 1944, and eight men who had previously been arrested on a charge of murder were committed for trial.

The trial opened in Accra in November, 1944, the presiding judge being Mustapha Fuad Bey, C.M.G., a Cypriot of Turkish descent, who had been educated in England and called to the English Bar, and was esteemed in the Gold Coast as one of the best Judges of the Supreme Court. The jury consisted of eight Africans and one European, while all the Counsel engaged in the case, both for the prosecution and for the defence, were Africans.* The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution was to the effect that Akyea Mensah went on the fatal morning to the Ahenfie (the house of the Omanhene) and was seen with the eight accused in one of the courtyards. There, after he had been given something to drink, he was suddenly struck on the back of the neck with a stick and overpowered, a "sappo," or ceremonial dagger, being then thrust through his cheeks as an effective gag. It is probable that after this his head was cut off and that his blood was used to "wash" or "blacken" the Stool of Sir Ofori Atta in accordance with custom. An attempt was made by the defence to deny that the skull and bones referred to in the evidence were those of Akyea Mensah, and were in fact those of a woman; I believe this to be nonsense, but in any case the Judge most carefully warned the jury against accepting evidence regarding these remains. In the end, and on the evidence before them, the

* This point is of some importance in view of the fantastic suggestions made later to which I will refer.

jury unanimously found all the eight accused guilty of murder and they were duly sentenced to death. There was rejoicing among the African population when this verdict was given.*

Within a week of the conviction an appeal to the West African Court of Appeal was filed, a perfectly proper proceeding and one that is taken in practically every murder case in the Gold Coast ; the appeal was dismissed on the 15th February, 1945. Now began that series of fruitless appeals which held up the executions and brought the law into disrepute in the colony. A petition for leave to appeal to the Privy Council was lodged, but the necessary papers were not forwarded for some time† and it was not until November, 1945, that the Privy Council considered and dismissed the petition.

As soon as the Privy Council decision had been given I consulted my Executive Council, as I was required to do by the Royal Instructions, and was advised that the law should take its course in respect of all the eight murderers.‡ The Royal Instructions, however, required me, notwithstanding any advice by Executive Council, to use my own deliberate judgment in deciding these capital cases, and after careful thought I commuted the sentences of the two youngest of the murderers to twenty years' imprisonment and ordered that the other six should be executed. I recorded my views at the time in the following words :

" . . . I find myself unable to accept entirely the advice of Executive Council, as I consider that public vengeance for the crime committed will be satisfied, and that sufficient deterrent effect will be produced, if a lesser number were executed. Justice must be done, but I feel it my duty to exercise the prerogative of mercy to the utmost possible extent."

The executions were ordered for the 23rd and 24th November, but had to be postponed as shortly before they were to be carried out the defence applied to the Supreme Court for the quashing of the coroner's inquisition and all subsequent proceedings thereon.

* It is unusual for Africans to rejoice at a conviction ; see p. 65 above.

† Rules subsequently promulgated will prevent such delays in future.

‡ It is unusual, and indeed improper, to divulge the advice given in Executive Council, but so strong is the feeling in the Gold Coast that all of these men should have been executed that it is only fair to my colleagues that I should accept the full responsibility myself for what was, in fact, my own decision.

On this and other occasions the men were transferred from the prison where they were confined to another prison in the same town (Accra) where the gallows were located, and subsequently returned, but neither then nor later was any one of them taken into the gallows yard or shown the gallows, and then taken back to his cell. One man on one occasion was placed in the "condemned cell" and then taken back, owing to one of the usual last-minute appeals having won him a temporary reprieve. The movement of the men from one prison to another was inevitable in view of the lack of accommodation in the prison containing the gallows. I mention these facts in view of the suggestions made later, to elicit the sympathy of those who did not know the real circumstances of the case, that the men were taken several times to the gallows and suffered much mental agony in consequence ; such mental suffering as they endured was due entirely to the action of the defence and I dealt with this point in the statement quoted below.

The application made to the Supreme Court was promptly refused and a petition for special leave to appeal to the Privy Council against this refusal was lodged, only to be dismissed by the Privy Council in January, 1946. Application was then made by the defence to the Attorney General of the Gold Coast for his fiat for the issue of a writ of error, which the Attorney General refused. The Supreme Court was then applied to for the issue of a mandamus compelling the Attorney General to issue his fiat but the case was struck out. Notice of intention to appeal to the Privy Council against this decision was then given and in due course (July, 1946) the Privy Council dismissed this—the third—appeal.

Civil proceedings against the Attorney General were then instituted, claiming damages for his alleged wrongful refusal to grant his fiat, and the Supreme Court ordered these proceedings to be stayed absolutely, as being frivolous and vexatious and an abuse of the process of the Court. An appeal on this point was dismissed (September, 1946) by the West African Court of Appeal, which was then applied to for leave to appeal to the Privy Council ; this was refused, and the defence then gave notice of intention to appeal on this point also !

In the meantime, as a result of these appeals, the defence

had succeeded in causing a considerable delay, and now thought it best to seek political assistance in their fight against the law. A number of members of Parliament were circularised, some of whom approached the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the subject, and on the 3rd August, 1946, I received a "secret" telegram from the Secretary of State (Mr., afterwards Viscount, Hall) which I set out below in parallel columns with my reply. The Secretary of State later (with my consent) allowed these telegrams to be printed in a pamphlet published by the defence.

Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Governor, 3rd August, 1946 :

Apedwa murder. I have now received and considered representations from a number of Members of Parliament and have met a deputation of them who urged me to intervene in this case on the following grounds :

(1) The long delay since the date of sentence and the "repeated conveyance of the condemned persons to the place of execution" would in this country call for commutation of the death sentence.

Telegram from the Governor to the Secretary of State, 8th August, 1946 :

I am satisfied that the execution of the six condemned men should proceed as soon as possible. Following are my comments on the representations conveyed in your telegram :

(1) Long delay in execution is not the fault of the Government, but is due entirely to the course persistently adopted by the defence in bringing hopeless actions before the Courts and continuing with protracted appeals. It is inconceivable that in England a lawyer would continue to take part in such proceedings in this way. On each occasion counsel for condemned men delayed legal action until the latest possible day before execution could take place although the removal of the prisoners to cells near to the place of execution was deferred each time by the Government as long as possible. Any suffering caused is due entirely to the action of so-called friends of the murderers who throughout have deliberately delayed action to gain time.

(2) Six persons should not be executed for the murder of one.

"

(3) The trial was unsatisfactory from many points of view, mainly :

(a) The jury was drawn from a tribe alien to that of the accused, plus one European.

(2) The eight murderers were all equally guilty. In commuting sentence on two on the grounds of age I stretched prerogative of mercy to the furthest limit (and if I made a mistake it was on the side of leniency). Several executions for one murder by no means uncommon. Five Elmina murderers were executed for one murder and I have known similar cases in Nigeria. I do not agree with the argument advanced which is quite new to me especially as I have always understood that the basis of this case was what lawyers call "common purpose."

(a) The jury was empanelled in the usual way and it is surprising that it should be suggested at this stage that it was hostile to prisoners. If such argument be admitted the only future solution appears to be the abolition of all juries here. I would remind you that the murdered man was of the same tribe as the murderers and the people of his village bitterly resent the murder. Trial by jury in Accra was in fact favourable to the accused as the jury were detached from the strong local prejudice against the prisoners and the jury was kept together throughout the long trial in charge of Court officer. At the trial the prisoners did not avail themselves of the invitation to challenge the jurors, though defended by five counsel two of whom were of the same tribe as the prisoners. This is significant as such challenges are common here.

(b) Neither judge nor jury understood the language of the accused.

(c) No body was found and there was considerable doubt as to the identity of the bones.

(d) Material witnesses did not volunteer information until many months after it was publicly known that the case was being investigated by the police.

(e) When the witnesses did speak it was after a "medicine man" had declared that the accused were the murderers: the Judge however did not allow evidence on this subject to be given.

(b) Five of the prisoners speak good English and I should be surprised if most, if not all, of the African jurors did not understand the language of the prisoners' witnesses, which is Twi, while all prosecution and defence counsel were African. In any case there were the usual official interpreters. The suggestion that the prisoners were prejudiced is the more ridiculous as two of the defence counsel were of the prisoners' tribe and understood the Twi language.

(c) I understand that discovery of the body is not essential in murder cases. But the Judge when charging the jury warned them not to be influenced by evidence as to bones and not to convict unless they believed the evidence of eye-witnesses of the murder.

(d) The explanation is fear as all in this country know. In any big case witnesses are afraid to come forward until convinced that the authorities are behind them and feature of this case was the courage of prosecution witnesses who came forward and stuck to their stories despite pressure and threats to which they were subject over a long period before the trial. They had no police protection.

(e) Presumably reference is to fetish priest who when police investigations already initiated informed the police that No. 2 prisoner had confessed his part in the murder. Thereafter investigation took more serious turn in the course of which witnesses gave statement. Fetish priest was prosecution witness at the trial.

(f) Alibi put forward as defence by one accused was rebutted by evidence of a British official who subsequently withdrew evidence on the grounds that it referred to the wrong date ; no other attempt was made to shake the alibi.

(g) There was conflicting evidence as to the presence of Ofori Atta's stool in the stool-house.

(h) The Trial Judge was a Turk and a Mohammedan who had been criticised by the Privy Council on another occasion in connection with his notes and who "resigned on account of it."

(4) The Privy Council cannot retry a case ; it can take cognisance only of questions of procedure and it will not interfere unless it appears that the trial was so bad as to have been virtually no trial at all.

(f) The official was recalled because he wished to correct a date he had given in evidence and his evidence in relation to alibi was therefore discounted. But alibi was badly shaken by subsequent cross-examination of defence witnesses and as the verdict shows was disbelieved by the jury.

(g) There was no conflict in the prosecution's case though defence gave different evidence.

(h) Fuad is a British subject and a well-educated and cultured gentleman. In my opinion he was extremely efficient Judge. He is not the only Judge who has been criticised by a superior Court and it is absolutely untrue that he resigned on account of this criticism which occurred 18 months before this trial and two years before he retired on pension. Reference to his Turkish origin and Mohammedan religion is a disgusting example of racial prejudice and religious intolerance for which I have utter contempt. I am amazed that British members of Parliament should advance such an argument. I have no objection to your informing them of my views on this subject.

(4) Since rejection of the appeal by the West African Court of Appeal, despite its wide powers, the case has been before the Privy Council in one form or another three times. I strongly repudiate the suggestion that the trial was in any way irregular, especially after the failure of arguments before the Privy Council. Only thing wrong about this case has been action by the defence who in my view have by their tactics

abused the processes of the courts and brought the law into disrepute. Privy Council commented strongly on the fact that the alleged irregularities were never suggested by the defence at the proper place, namely, at the trial or before the West African Court of Appeal as required by law.

Delegation asked whether I would have any objection to their sending out representative to lay personally before you the views which they have expressed to me. They referred to the possibility of their representative taking with him a petition signed by some 400 Members of Parliament to convince you of "the weight of public opinion in this country."

In reply I emphasised differences between social conditions in the colony and in this country and importance of stamping out practices such as ritual murder. Moreover I made it clear that I do not interfere with the exercise of the Governor's discretion in a case of this kind but I undertook to inform you of the views expressed by the delegation. I therefore communicate to you their representations as above, leaving the matter for your decision and merely observing that many of the points made can of course be answered. You will no doubt let me know your decision and the position regarding the civil actions.

I find it difficult to believe that there is any "weight of public opinion" of any kind in England on this matter. If there is (as is suggested) this can only be based on entire misconception of the facts due to deliberate misrepresentation by interested parties. The real weight of public opinion is in this colony and is manifesting itself in growing indignation and impatience at the manner in which condemned prisoners have been allowed to obstruct the course of justice in this brutal murder and deduction is being drawn that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

It is fair to observe that the deputation has ventured to criticise the Judge and Court which tried the case, and my own decision in the matter, after hearing only *ex parte* and obviously distorted statement by one side. The Court and I had much more complete knowledge of the true facts and I should have considered myself lacking in balanced judgment if I had ventured to express an opinion or come to any decision after considering only the evidence for the prosecution.

As I was shortly proceeding to England on leave it was useless for any representative to come out to the Gold Coast. I had already more than once urged the Secretary of State to approve of my ordering the executions to be proceeded with, in spite of the persistent appeals,* but could not get his approval, although the responsibility for such action would have been mine alone and I did not shrink from exercising it. It was therefore extremely disconcerting to receive a request from the Secretary of State that the executions should be further postponed and that I should meet a deputation of members of Parliament when I arrived in England on leave ; I was forced to agree, making it plain that I did so with great reluctance. I suggested that the Secretary of State should himself be present at the meeting with the members of Parliament but he would not agree to this. I met the delegation twice, in September and October, 1946, and explained to them my view of the case ; they were most courteous and reasonable in the discussion.

Shortly after this Mr. Creech Jones became Secretary of State and I discussed the matter with him before returning to the Gold Coast in November, 1946. On my arrival there I was surprised to receive a telegram from the Secretary of State asking me not to allow the executions to proceed as he had been notified that some members of Parliament were preparing a memorial invoking His Majesty's residual prerogative of mercy ; on the 27th January, 1947, he informed me that as no memorial had been received I could take such action as I thought best. The executions were now ordered for the 4th February, but just before the first execution should have taken place I received a telegram informing me that a petition to His Majesty the King had been received and that the executions should be stayed. Once again, on the 26th February, 1947, I was informed that as no directions had been given on His Majesty's behalf regarding the petition the final decision rested with me. On

* In the House of Commons, on the 3rd April, 1947, Mr. Creech Jones, who had succeeded Viscount Hall as Secretary of State, made the following statement :

" . . . The Government's view is that in the future if a Governor comes to the conclusion that any application for leave to appeal is without real substance he should not allow the mere fact that an application is pending to affect his judgment in the carrying out of the death sentence."

I must emphasise that the delays in this case were not due to any failure by me to accept (and indeed to press) the principles set out in the above statement.

this I gave orders for the executions to be proceeded with on the 4th March.

On the 3rd March, Mr. Leslie Hale raised in the House of Commons on a point of order the refusal of the Speaker to allow at Question time a notice of urgency regarding the impending executions. The occasion was not one when the Secretary of State could properly have given the facts to the House, but the point of order was discussed at some length and with considerable heat, in spite of the Speaker's ruling that the subject matter was out of order. I have too great a respect for the Mother of Parliaments (even though the old lady is liable at times, as on this occasion, to become hysterical) to criticise the proceedings myself. Let me quote the Press instead. *The Economist* (of the 8th March, 1947) said that "the uproar in the House of Commons on Monday of this week over the delayed executions for ritual murder in the Gold Coast will long stand as a classic case of parliamentary solicitude for the welfare of colonial peoples at its most belated, ill-informed and misdirected . . . In matters of justice it is usually the best course to trust the juries, the judges and the executive authorities who are on the spot. If Members of Parliament are not prepared to do that, they should at least inform themselves of the facts." On the 7th March *The Tribune* said that "subsequently, when Members themselves began to acquire the facts, not only of the murder itself, but of the methods by which the long delay in the execution had been secured, many Members began to wonder whether in fact the House had not made a fool of itself."

It was strange that Mr. Churchill, who had himself served twice in the Colonial Office, should so strongly have urged the Secretary of State to overrule a Governor in the exercise of the Royal Prerogative delegated to him (and even suggested the suspension of the Governor). The Secretary of State himself was in a difficult position, as he was unprepared for the discussion knowing that the Speaker had ruled out of order the question which Mr. Hale subsequently raised in another form; moreover, it would have been highly improper for him, as a Minister of the Crown, to disobey the ruling of the Chair by making a statement. Mr. Creech Jones was also handicapped by his personal dislike for the capital penalty. In my

opinion he was bound to telegraph to me, as he did, a statement of what had occurred in the House and to transmit to me the request of the members that the matter should be reconsidered by me.

On receipt of this telegram I consulted those of my Executive Council who were in Accra, and after hearing their views decided to postpone the executions. It appeared to me from the telegram that His Majesty's Government had failed and were unwilling to support me in this matter in the face of the fierce attack made on my decision in the House of Commons, but I could not conscientiously be a party to a reprieve which in my opinion would have been a surrender of the principles of justice to the power of money and influence. If I gave way in the matter I felt that the people of the Gold Coast would feel, with some justification, that one in whom they had trusted had betrayed them. In these circumstances there seemed to be only one course open to me, and with great regret I asked the Secretary of State by telegram to obtain His Majesty's permission for me to relinquish my appointment. In reply the Secretary of State asked me to allow him to defer the submission to the King pending a statement which he intended to make in the House of Commons, and I agreed to this.

On the 5th March the Secretary of State made a full statement on the case in the House of Commons, which now for the first time heard all the facts. In the discussion that followed, Colonel Oliver Stanley, a former Secretary of State, made a kindly reference to my services, as the Secretary of State had also done, and I think that most of the members of the House began to realise that I was not the bloodthirsty tyrant they had been encouraged to think me. More important was the fact that in reply to a question by Mr. Callaghan (one of the few who kept their heads in the previous discussion) the Secretary of State gave an assurance that "the Governor will have the full support of the Government in whatever decision he finally reaches." After hearing of this assurance I decided to withdraw my resignation.

The reactions in the Gold Coast to the House of Commons debates and the rumour of my resignation were interesting. *The Ashanti Pioneer*, a newspaper published in Kumasi, contained in its issue of

the 8th March an open letter addressed to me, which said : "Let me assure you that the whole Gold Coast public is solidly behind your actions. However much the Parliamentary wolves growl against you, our feelings towards you will never change." I received from the Provincial Councils of Chiefs resolutions of support and requests that I should not resign, while 17 out of the 18 elected members of the Legislative Council* sent a request that an extraordinary meeting of the Council should be convened immediately to consider a resolution on the subject, which included a demand that the murderers should be executed. There was, indeed, much resentment in the Gold Coast at the "interference" of the House of Commons in a matter of which it had little knowledge, and which was well within the competence of the local Legislative Council to discuss if such discussion were necessary—or proper.

On the 20th March I was informed by the Secretary of State that there was now no further reason for delay, and therefore, after again consulting my Executive Council, I ordered that the execution of the five murderers (one of the condemned men had previously died in prison) should be proceeded with on the 24th March. Eleven minutes before the hour fixed for the first execution notice was given that an application was being made for a writ of Habeas Corpus and the executions were postponed. On the judge refusing to issue the writ three of the murderers were hanged, but notice of appeal to the Privy Council was then received from the defence and the execution of the other two murderers was again postponed. An attempt to initiate another debate in the House of Commons on the subject was stopped by the Speaker, and on the 28th March, 1947, I decided to commute to life imprisonment the sentences of death on the two remaining men. My reasons for doing so are contained in the following statement which I made to the Legislative Council on that day. (A great part of the statement appeared in the English press.)

"I regret that before I adjourn the Council I must ask you to listen to a statement I wish to make on a matter that has been engaging public attention for some time. I think that as this Council is now in session it is due to you,

* The 18th member who did not sign was Dr. J. B. Danquah, a close relative of the murderers and the man who organised their defence.

as the representatives of the people of this country that I should make the statement to you.

As you are aware, three of the eight men condemned to death for the murder of Akyea Mensah in February, 1944, were executed in Accra Prison last Monday. Of the others, I had already commuted the sentences of two, and one had died in prison.

Much has been said, generally by people who were not acquainted with the facts of the case, or who deliberately misrepresented these facts, about the repeated postponements of execution and the mental sufferings which the condemned men are supposed to have endured in consequence.

It is well known in this Colony that these postponements were due to no fault of the Government, but to the deliberate delaying tactics of the defence. In the House of Commons the Secretary of State for the Colonies referred to the "ingenuity" of the advisers of the condemned men, which is perhaps not an adequate description of their conduct of the case, but I need not go into this point.

You will all know, as well as I do, that the defence deliberately waited on each occasion until the very last moment to take action which had been planned long before. On the last occasion, although it was known on Saturday that the executions had been fixed for Monday, it was not until a few minutes before the time appointed for the first execution that notice was served of the intention to apply for a writ of *habeas corpus*, although application could have been made at any time on Saturday or Sunday.

It is my firm conviction that on each occasion the condemned men were well aware of the intention of the defence to take such last-moment steps to avert execution, and that for this reason they did not believe they were about to be executed, and therefore suffered none of the mental torture alleged.

On the last occasion, however, the position was different. The two men who were to have been executed after the others on Monday last, but whose executions were postponed because of yet another appeal to the Privy Council, knew that three of their accomplices had actually paid the supreme penalty, and that the tactics of the defence had failed. In such circumstances they must have anticipated a similar fate for themselves, and suffered mentally in anticipation.

For this reason, and for this reason alone, I have decided to commute the sentences imposed on the two remaining men, who, like the other two murderers whose sentences I had already commuted, will suffer life imprisonment. I desire to emphasise that I have come to this decision not because I think these murderers deserve mercy, but because of the circumstances connected with the last postponement of execution.

I have taken this decision in spite of the considered opinion of my advisers, for whose judgment I have the greatest respect, that the law should take its course and that the two remaining men should be executed. I am aware also

that public opinion in the Gold Coast, where all the facts of the case are well known, is strongly in favour of their execution.

The fact remains that it is on my shoulders, and mine alone, that the responsibility rests, and that, having given careful attention to the advice I have received, I must come to a decision in accordance with the dictates of my own conscience. I have felt grave doubts whether, in view of the circumstances I have mentioned, it would be right to execute these men, in spite of their undoubted guilt. It has been a difficult decision to make, as I know quite well that the delays have been caused by the defence with deliberate intent, but nevertheless the doubt remains in my mind, and I must give these men the benefit of the doubt and exercise in their favour the Royal prerogative of mercy which has been delegated to me.

Three of those guilty of the abominable murder of Akyea Mensah have paid the full penalty of their crime, and their four accomplices will be imprisoned for life.

There has been criticism in England of my refusal to commute the sentences of all the murderers, based partly on a belief that the trial was unfair, partly on the delays that have occurred, and in some cases owing to a genuine dislike of the death penalty in any circumstances.

As to the first, I can only say that these murderers were found guilty by a jury of whom all but one were Africans, and that the case has three times been up to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which has, on each occasion, refused permission to appeal. I have been advised by my legal advisers, and the Secretary of State has been advised by his legal advisers, that in this case there has been no miscarriage of justice.

As to the delays that have occurred, I have already pointed out where the responsibility lies.

As regards the dislike for the death penalty, I should like to say that I am myself no enthusiast for capital punishment, but, so long as it is the penalty prescribed by law for the crime of murder, that law must be carried out, and it should, I am convinced, be applied equally to rich and poor alike. Many of those who have objected to the death penalty in this case seem to have overlooked the fact that in England, as in the Gold Coast, many persons have been executed since these murderers were condemned to death.

Because these men were wealthy they were able to delay their execution by repeated appeals which poorer men could not have afforded. Because they were wealthy, and of an influential family, they were able by means of a subtle propaganda to enlist the sympathy of people in England as poorer and less influential men could not have done.

I have firmly refused to be a party to what I believe to be wrong, and to show mercy to rich men which I would not have shown to the poor. It is my duty to administer the Government of this Colony without fear or favour, that is, without favour to the rich and influential, and without fear of the consequences

to myself. I am convinced that the action I have taken in this matter was correct.

I know also that in my decision to execute the murderers I had the overwhelming support of the people of the Gold Coast, who know better than anyone else the whole facts of the case and their true significance. I have received many assurances to this effect for which I am deeply grateful, and not least I appreciate the Resolutions passed by the Provincial Councils which bear the signatures of 62 Chiefs, or representatives of Chiefs, out of the 63 States of the Colony. I would add that the six members of the House of Commons who recently visited the Gold Coast, and are acquainted with the facts, telegraphed to assure me of their support in this matter.

I have explained to you that my decision to commute the sentences of the two remaining murderers was in accordance with the dictates of my own conscience, and that must with me be the most important influence. But I am glad that my decision may also bring to a close a most distressing case, which has given to the Gold Coast a notoriety that has already done it immeasurable harm. People in other countries who know little of the facts will have been led to believe that ritual murder is common practice in the colony. They will not know that the Gold Coast people are in general a decent, law-abiding people, who view with horror such a crime as this one. They will forget the splendid record of this Colony in peace and war, and think only of the Gold Coast as a place where human sacrifice exists.

The Gold Coast people themselves will know quite well who are responsible for this unfortunate advertisement of a barbarous crime, which has brought discredit on their country. I am not a native of the Gold Coast, but after five years of service here I have come to have a high regard for the country and an affection for its people, and I resent this entirely unwarranted slur on their good name. I want to emphasise, and I hope that my words will be repeated in other countries, that ritual murder is *not* a common practice in the Gold Coast, and that such a crime is viewed with horror by the vast majority of the people. I want also to emphasise that it was almost entirely an African jury which found these men guilty of murder, and that African public opinion throughout has been strongly in favour of their execution.

Let me say one final word. Do not think because of what has happened that law and justice have failed. No law, however carefully drafted, can provide for all contingencies, but justice will always prevail in the end however it may be abused. Keep your trust in the impartiality of the law and your faith in the principles of justice."

I believe that all reasonable men were satisfied by this statement. *The Daily Echo*, a newspaper published in Accra, said in its issue of the 31st March, 1947: "We accept in its entirety Sir Alan's explanation . . . The delay between sentence and justice was attributable

solely to the reasons he gave . . . We are fully satisfied that justice has been done . . . Throughout the whole of the melancholy proceedings Sir Alan's attitude has been exemplary, and he has gone through a very trying period with restraint, impartiality and dignity." On the 31st March *The Times* expressed the opinion that "Sir Alan Burns's conception of his responsibility, first in withholding and finally in exercising his prerogative of mercy, should be generally approved both in this country and in the Gold Coast itself."

I received, almost inevitably, some letters of abuse from cranks in England who thought it "brutal" to hang the murderers, and one lady compared me unfavourably with Shylock, who, she pointed out, would have been satisfied with only one pound of flesh. On the other hand, I was congratulated by several prominent persons in England on the stand I had taken, and by numbers of my colleagues in the Colonial Service who, knowing the issues involved, were better able than most to exercise a fair judgment in the case.

I am convinced that the action I took was the right one. Had I yielded to the pressure brought to bear on me from various influential quarters, or to the clamour in the House of Commons, irreparable harm would have been done to the cause of justice in the Gold Coast and indeed throughout the colonial empire. The ignorant people would have been led to believe that "juju" had triumphed over justice; those more sophisticated would have realised that the rich and influential had a better chance of evading the penalties of crime than others had and that in fact there was a different law for the rich than for the poor. In this connection I must say that it caused me much surprise to find members of the Labour Party, which is supposed to stand against privilege of any kind, urging the reprieve of these murderers who had been rich enough to postpone their execution by repeated, although hopeless, appeals.

Had my decision been overruled by the Secretary of State, as members of the House of Commons urged that it should be, every murder case in every colony would have led to appeals to the Colonial Office, with resultant delays which would have shaken the foundations of justice. Again, while it is clear that in the last resort Parliament is responsible for the administration of those colonies

which are not yet self-governing, it is not in the interests of justice in those colonies that criminals should be encouraged to seek political aid when the courts have condemned them.

On the conduct of the defence in this case it is difficult to write with restraint. A lawyer is admittedly bound to do all he can for his client, but in what claims to be an honourable profession there must be some standards which ought to be observed. I am not a lawyer and do not know what these standards are, but this is the opinion of the Privy Council (as reported in *The Times* of the 17th July, 1947) expressed when the last appeal in the case was being dismissed :

"Lord Thankerton, announcing their Lordships' decision, said that this was the fourth application to the Board arising out of the same convictions. Counsel for the petitioners was unable to suggest that the petitioners in any way suffered prejudice at the trial, or that all information founded on was not available at the time of the trial. Their Lordships viewed with grave concern and disapproval the unusual procedure adopted in this case in the multiplication of applications to the Board. Their Lordships found it difficult to avoid the conclusion that that course was either adopted deliberately, which would constitute an abuse of the due administration of justice, or arose from an inexcusable ignorance or disregard to the law, procedural or otherwise, involved in applications to the Board."

The London solicitor of the defence, Mr. A. L. Bryden, sent me the following telegram on the 16th March, 1947 :

"Advise you your own interest and that your advisers await our letters eleventh twelfth instant to your Colonial Secretary pointing out you may render yourself liable trial King's Bench England for murder if you direct execution men whose convictions are nullities."

This impudent telegram and the equally impudent letters to which it referred appeared to me to be an attempt to intimidate me in the execution of my duty, or perhaps, in the words of Lord Thankerton, showed only "an inexcusable ignorance or disregard to the law." I leave it to other lawyers to say whether this is the sort of communication a solicitor should send to the King's Representative in a colony.

I have said as little as I could, out of my respect for Parliament, of the actions of members of the House of Commons in this case, but I feel justified in referring to the action

of Mr. Sidney Silverman, M.P., because he himself, without adequate knowledge of the facts, rushed into print on the subject. In *The Tribune* of the 26th July, 1946, Mr. Silverman wrote : "... If these men hang, they do not hang for justice. They hang to protect a Colonial Government's prestige." The suggestion seems to be that I, as Governor, would order innocent men to be hanged for the sake of my own prestige. There is not a shadow of foundation for such a suggestion as there was no question of any prestige other than the prestige of the law itself ; African public opinion in the Gold Coast was overwhelmingly in favour of the execution of *all* the murderers. Mr. Silverman did not rest content with this. On the 12th March, 1947, he asked in the House of Commons "under what authority the Governor has in these cases compelled the relatives of the condemned men to witness their execution ?" To this the Secretary of State replied : "I should like to make it clear, though I should have thought in this House it was absolutely unnecessary, that no such authority exists. Indeed, I take the strongest exception to any suggestion that the Governor would take such action." The suggestion that I had compelled the relatives of the condemned men to witness their execution was entirely unfounded.

There were many curious incidents connected with this case. One was the conspiracy of three Africans and one European to abet perjury by instigating certain persons to swear that they had seen Akyea Mensah alive after the date on which he is believed to have been murdered. One of the Africans was a brother of three of the murderers and belonged to the Ofori Atta family, another was a barrister and a member of the Prempeh family (the family of the Asantehene). It was part of the conspiracy that the European should pretend to be a District Commissioner with a view to impressing the persons it was intended to suborn. All four were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment, and the convictions were upheld after the usual appeals to the Privy Council, Their Lordships expressing the opinion that there was ample evidence to support the finding that all four appellants were guilty of conspiracy to persuade others to commit perjury.

Dr. J. B. Danquah,* also closely related to Sir Ofori Atta and to some of the murderers, was charged with instigating a witness not to give evidence in the case, but was acquitted, the presiding Judge saying (according to a report in the *African Morning Post* of the 13th December, 1944) :

"The charge is of a serious nature if proved against any member of the public, but is particularly serious if proved against a practising barrister . . . Not only must the Court be satisfied beyond any reasonable doubt with regard to the guilt of the accused, but it must come to a conclusion adverse to the accused on the strength of the evidence for the prosecution and not on the weakness of the defence. Particular attention must be given to this rule of law as were it not so after hearing the witnesses for the defence I would have had no hesitation in convicting the accused. I will say no more with regard to the evidence of the defence except to state in no uncertain terms that I do not believe it and I am satisfied that the alibi was a complete fabrication."

Many people wondered where the money came from to pay for the numerous appeals and other expenses of this long-drawn-out case, and it has been suggested that Akyea Mensah was killed not merely for ritual purposes, but also in order that the murderers and others concerned should be rid of one who knew too much about their family finances and the source of their wealth.

It has been rumoured that others besides Akyea Mensah were sacrificed in connection with the funeral "custom" of Sir Ofori Atta. We have as yet no proof of this, but in view of the incidents connected with this case nothing would surprise me.

The people of Apedwa, under great provocation, were persuaded to take no revenge for the murder of their Odikro, but I am convinced that if some at least of the murderers had not been executed they would have taken a bloody revenge on those they held responsible.

It is most unfortunate that the prestige of the State of Akim Abuakwa, built up by Sir Ofori Atta through many years of wise administration, should have been destroyed by the action of his own

* Dr. Danquah is a barrister, and a member of the Legislative Council.

kindred.* Sir Ofori Atta was a great man, whom I was glad to count as a friend, and it is tragic that his funeral "custom" should have been the occasion of a brutal murder ; it is still more tragic that the conduct of the defence in this case should have brought to the Gold Coast such a great deal of unpleasant notoriety.

The end of the murder case coincided with the last session of the Legislative Council over which I presided, and the Council was good enough on this occasion to pass a Resolution placing on record its appreciation of my work in the Gold Coast. In my reply I said that I had presided over or served in the legislatures of four colonies, but in none had I felt greater confidence than in the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast. I added that I looked forward to hearing of the continued progress and success of the Council, in confirmation of the faith that I had proclaimed in the political sagacity of the Gold Coast people.

On the 24th June I met the Chiefs of the Colony at Cape Coast and there received from them an address and a replica in gold of the emblem of the Joint Provincial Council, a stool with crossed state swords chained to it. It was a generous gesture and I greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet officially for the last time so many of the Chiefs who were my personal friends.

My wife, who had been President of the Girl Guides' Association in the Gold Coast, was also given a farewell party by the Guides, who presented her with mementoes which she greatly values, while I, as local Chief Scout, received an address and memento from the Boy Scouts' Association. From many other bodies, official and private, and from numerous friends of all races, we received farewell messages, and the kindness of all was almost overwhelming. It culminated on the day of our departure from Accra when thousands of people came to see us off, including many chiefs and other prominent persons, some of whom had travelled long distances to Accra for the occasion. After bidding farewell to our African staff at Government House who had served us so faithfully, and after my

* Sir Ofori Atta also helped materially to build up the prestige of the Gold Coast. By this murder and later in other ways his family have dragged the good name of the Gold Coast through the mud.

wife had taken a last look at the garden which she had so greatly improved, we drove from Christiansborg Castle to the Customs Beach through streets lined with schoolchildren and others, with a ceremonial escort of mounted police. There, after inspecting a fine Guard of Honour mounted by the Gold Coast Regiment and saying farewell to the leading members of the community, most of whom were our personal friends, we embarked in a surf-boat and were paddled towards the steamer which lay about a mile from the shore, while a salute was fired from a battery of guns on the beach. As we passed the end of the breakwater which shelters the tiny Accra "harbour," police buglers* sounded the "Hausa Farewell," the same call that was sounded for me when I left Nigeria many years before. And so we reached the steamer and were hoisted on board in a "mammy-chair," departing from the West African coast by the same primitive means that were used when I first arrived there thirty-five years before.

We left the Gold Coast and our friends there with very real regret. From the Civil Service, both African and European, from the mining and commercial communities, from the Missions of all denominations, and from the people of all races and all classes, we had received during our years in the colony nothing but kindly friendliness, co-operation and loyal support. The Gold Coast is inhabited by a grand people for whom we have a deep and abiding affection. Good luck to them all.†

* One of the local papers, announcing the arrangements made for our departure, stated that the "Hausa Farewell" would be sounded by "burglars." This would have been a pleasant compliment from a hard-working profession.

† About seven months after I left the Gold Coast there were serious riots at Accra and other places. The Commission of Inquiry which reported on these riots has recommended some drastic changes in the constitution of the Gold Coast. I am in favour of constitutional progress in all colonies but not of surrender to violence or of undue haste. The 1946 constitution which the Commission condemned was accepted willingly by the people at the time and was less than two years old when the riots occurred. The people of the Gold Coast should be given time to prove their ability to work this constitution, which was a considerable advance on its predecessor (and the most liberal in tropical Africa), before being hurried forward along the road.

CHAPTER X

WARS AND RIOTS

ONE of the earliest incidents that I can clearly remember was the rioting in St. Kitts in 1896, when I was eight years old. The trouble started on some of the sugar estates where the wages paid were very low indeed, and in spite of the efforts made by my father, who was Treasurer of St. Kitts, to persuade the Administrator to take action, nothing was done, and many fields of sugar-cane were burned and other damage caused. Finally, after some weeks of suspense, mobs of estate labourers came into the town of Basseterre, where they broke into the "rum shops" and got gloriously drunk. They then paraded the streets, stoning the houses of the white residents and breaking most of their glass windows, and assaulting any they could find ; every field of sugar-cane around the town was also alight and burning furiously. The noise and glare from fires seemed terrific, but I was not too young to see the humour of the situation. I can remember my mother pushing my younger brother under the bed as stones flew into the room where we were gathered, while he crawled out the other side as quickly as he could. I can also remember my father coming into the room carrying an ancient revolver which filled my mother with alarm ; he comforted her by saying that it was quite safe as he had no ammunition for it.

While the mob took possession of the town the authorities, I regret to say, did very little. The police were badly led and were practically useless, while few of the white population were armed. Fortunately, however, H.M.S. *Cordelia* had arrived, but again the Administrator refused to take my father's advice to ask for marines to be landed. When circumstances later compelled him to ask for their assistance he refused to allow the marines to fire on the mob, even after houses in the town had been set alight and the rioters were trying to cut the hoses of the fire brigade. Later that night, as the situation grew worse, one of the officers of the *Cordelia*, the future Admiral de Robeck, took on himself the responsibility of giving the order to fire ; two men were killed and the riot immediately collapsed.

It is remarkable how often rioting occurred in the British West Indies and how seldom effective action was taken in time. The danger of a slave rising was always in the minds of the slave-owners before emancipation, and some of these risings were very serious indeed; they were invariably followed by savage punishments. After the abolition of slavery the danger was no less great and the history of these colonies is chequered by riot after riot. The most notorious was that in Jamaica in 1865, which was suppressed by Governor Eyre with what was considered unnecessary severity; this led to his recall, but there were many persons who considered that he had been unjustly treated and that the action he took saved the lives and property of the white population.

It is the fact that the rioters are of a different race from those against whom they riot that adds to the dangers of such disorders in the tropical colonies. Racial feeling, grievances real or imagined, and the hysterical reaction of the coloured man to excitement, intensify a situation which may have arisen from a comparative trifle. The Negro who is normally a law-abiding and decent person is a very different being when intoxicated by liquor and words. He then knows no restraint, and the eyes of an excited Negro mob reveal what lies beneath the usual veneer of civilisation. But as a rule, taken in good time and handled with discretion and humour, the Negro mob is not unreasonable provided that it is comparatively sober. Often enough the trouble starts between two sections of the Negro community, and only turns into an anti-Government riot when the police interfere to restore order.*

Such was the riot which occurred in Antigua in 1858, when the employment of a stevedore from Barbuda† was resented by the Antiguans, who destroyed his house and the houses of other Barbudians. The unfortunate man who was the cause of the trouble took refuge in the Police Station which was then attacked by the mob, and the police were forced to fire in their own defence. The rioting continued for some days and resulted in eight deaths and a number of persons being wounded. In a despatch to the Secretary of State for

* This often happens, for instance, in the Gold Coast; see p. 258.

† Barbuda is a dependency of Antigua, and is an island of about 60 square miles lying 25 miles north of Antigua; not to be confused with Barbados.

the Colonies the Governor wrote : " . . . there is a chance in popular commotions of this character that every town in the West Indies may, in succession, be burnt down, when the Governor has no military assistance to which he can resort for support." This incident is of some personal interest to me as my grandfather was one of those who removed his family to a place of safety outside the town, while he and the other white men joined the "Gentlemen Volunteers," who were commanded by an old colonel, a veteran of Waterloo. I have copies of letters written home from Antigua giving personal accounts of the riot. It is interesting to see how the disorders, which started in a dispute between Negroes of two different islands, ended up as a racial conflict between whites and blacks.

As a result of the numerous riots in the West Indies, volunteer forces were raised in most of the colonies. When I joined the Civil Service in St. Kitts I also enlisted in the local Volunteers, in which I rose gradually to the exalted rank of Regimental Sergeant-Major. The Force varied in size from time to time and when I was a member consisted of a company of mounted infantry and one of infantry. A detachment, of which I was one, represented the St. Kitts Volunteers at the coronation of King George the Fifth in London in 1911. The Force was perhaps not very efficient for modern warfare, but it served the purpose for which it was raised and gave an elementary military training to many of us who found this training useful a few years later. The Force included many good shots, and a team from each of the Leeward Islands volunteer forces competed annually for the Strickland Trophy, a handsome piece of plate presented by Sir Gerald (afterwards Lord) Strickland when he was Governor of the Leeward Islands. I managed once to get into the team, and I was also lucky enough in 1911 to win a challenge cup for rifle shooting given by Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott, who was then Governor.

The local volunteers in St. Kitts and in other colonies where I have served have always been a subject of ridicule, as were the Territorials in Great Britain until they proved their worth in war. Most of the people who laughed at them, however, were glad enough of their existence when there was a danger of civil disorders. There is every reason for law-abiding people in the colonies to be grateful for

instead of scornful of the public spirit of those who take the trouble to make themselves fit to protect the community, and, apart from this, these volunteer forces provide a reserve of at least partially trained soldiers on which larger forces can be built up in time of war. There is, of course, always the possibility that naval assistance will be forthcoming in the event of a riot, but it is not desirable for a colony to count on this as none of His Majesty's ships may be within reach when help is urgently needed. I certainly found the training I had received in the St. Kitts Volunteers of value ; I was in Nigeria in 1914 when war broke out and joined the Nigeria Land Contingent, under which curious name a volunteer force of Europeans was raised. Thanks to the training I had already received I was made a sergeant, and a few weeks later was given a commission and proceeded on active service with the expedition which attacked the German colony of the Cameroons.

Most of the African troops in the British West African colonies belonged to the West African Frontier Force, which included the Nigeria Regiment, the Gold Coast Regiment, the Sierra Leone Battalion, and the Gambia Company. The men were recruited locally* and the officers, with a few non-commissioned officers, were seconded for a few years at a time from their British regiments. Each colony was financially responsible for its own troops and there was an Inspector-General appointed by the Colonial Office and seconded from the British Army. In addition to these colonial troops there were two Imperial regiments stationed at Sierra Leone for which the War Office was responsible. These were the West India Regiment, recruited in the British West Indies, and the West African Regiment recruited in Sierra Leone ; both units had British officers and some non-commissioned officers seconded from British regiments. These two Imperial units were disbanded after the war of 1914-18.

The origin of the West African Frontier Force is of some interest. In 1897, when friction with the French in Africa was becoming serious (the Fashoda incident occurred in 1898), the territories of the Royal Niger Company were thought to be in danger from French aggression. Colonel (afterwards Lord) Lugard was sent to Nigeria

* In some cases they came from adjoining French colonies.

to raise a local force for the protection of the country which was to be financed by the Imperial Government and officered from the British Army. This force was called the West African Frontier Force ; later all the colonial troops in West Africa were included in it, and the colonies became responsible for their own units in the Force. For a long time these West African troops were spoken of as Hausas, probably because the original Lagos Constabulary, raised in 1864, and later known as the Lagos Hausa Force, was almost entirely composed of Hausa-speaking men ; it is only in the Nigeria Regiment that the majority of the men speak Hausa today.

The West African Frontier Force (and the older forces which preceded it) has distinguished itself in numerous minor local wars, including the Ashanti wars of 1873 and 1900. In the war of 1914-18 it took a prominent part in the conquest of the German colonies of Togoland, the Cameroons, and German East Africa ; Regimental Sergeant-Major Alhaji Grunshi, D.C.M., M.M., of the Gold Coast Regiment, is believed to have fired the first shot of the war on the British side, in August, 1914, during the attack on Togoland. It was in recognition of the splendid services of the Force during that war that His Majesty King George the Fifth became Colonel-in-Chief, and the Force became the Royal West African Frontier Force. In the war of 1939-45 the Force added to its laurels in Italian East Africa and Ethiopia, and later in Burma.

The men of the Royal West African Frontier Force make fine soldiers. On parade they are smart and obviously take pride in their work and appearance. In action, led by British officers,* they have proved brave and reliable, and capable of enduring much hardship. I think it is safe to say that the Europeans in West Africa are as proud of this force as are the Africans themselves, and I have heard heated arguments between Europeans as to the respective merits, for instance, of the Nigeria and Gold Coast Regiments ; having served in both colonies I prefer to remain neutral in this argument.

The expedition to the Cameroons consisted of British and French troops, mostly West Africans with European officers, and was under

* Only two Africans, both natives of the Gold Coast, received combatant commissions during the war of 1939-45 ; there were a few African Medical Officers and Chaplains commissioned.

the command of Brigadier-General Sir Charles Dobell ; the naval forces were commanded by Captain (afterwards Admiral Sir C. T. M.) Fuller. Togoland had already surrendered on the 27th August, and fighting had taken place between the Germans and units of the Nigeria Regiment on the Cameroons frontier, in almost every case to the advantage of the Germans. It had therefore been decided to despatch a larger force and to strike first at Duala, the principal town of the Cameroons, situated on the estuary of a river of the same name.

The ship in which I embarked, on the 19th September, 1914, was the S.S. *Appam*,* one of the passenger liners of Messrs. Elder Dempster and Company, which had been fitted up as a transport and was to be used later as a hospital ship. General Dobell and his staff, and the West African Regiment from Sierra Leone, were on board, and for this reason I was attached to the West African Regiment and not to the Nigeria Regiment as I had hoped. It was bad luck, because the West African Regiment was far inferior, both in discipline and in fighting value, to any unit of the West African Frontier Force.

The *Appam* was one of a convoy of ten transports which left Lagos escorted by the French cruiser *Bruix* and H.M.S. *Challenger* ; later we were joined by other vessels and the whole convoy anchored off the mouth of the Cameroons river four days later. Here we met other ships, including H.M.S. *Cumberland*, H.M.S. *Dwarf* (a gunboat of great age which had previously been on the China station), the *Ivy*, the yacht of the Governor-General of Nigeria, and several smaller vessels of the Nigerian Marine armed as gunboats ; these last were of great value in the amphibious warfare that followed in the rivers and creeks around Duala.

On the 28th September the *Challenger* entered the river and shelled the town of Duala, while some of us went by boats up one of the winding creeks which branched off from the main river. We were landed (if that is the right word) in a mangrove swamp, where we were always up to our knees and often up to our waists in water ; in these depressing surroundings I received my baptism of fire. We were re-embarked the same evening and returned to the *Appam*,

* Captured later, in 1916, by the German raider *Moewe*.

having accomplished nothing at all, but as Duala capitulated the following day we took some of the credit to ourselves, while acknowledging that the *Challenger's* guns may also have had some effect. Perhaps the Germans thought that troops capable of landing at such a place were capable of anything.

In Duala the people received the allied troops with open arms. The Germans had not, I think, ever been popular, but as they had hanged the local "king" a few days before, on the grounds that he was conspiring with the British, they had made themselves thoroughly hated. The German civilian prisoners seemed bewildered, and did exactly what they were told without argument; they feared the French more than us and one party of prisoners of whom I was in charge begged me not to hand them over to the French. Later, when we were moving up the river, our troops were cheered by the Africans on the bank, who freely cursed the Germans, and throughout the campaign we received considerable help from the local population; the Yaunde tribe, however, from which the Germans recruited most of their soldiers and to which many privileges were given, was an exception to the general rule, and proved very faithful to the Germans. British influence had been paramount in the Cameroons until 1885 and the Chiefs had repeatedly offered to place their territories under British protection, but the British Government was reluctant to assume the responsibility and the Germans stepped in. The people, however, declined to speak German and the use of "pidgin" English continued; the German colonists used a "pidgin" English-German dictionary and the German officers gave orders to their African troops in English. One Chief had kept a British flag concealed throughout the German regime and hoisted it with manifest pleasure when the Germans were driven out of his part of the country.*

After the surrender of Duala I took part in a couple of boat expeditions against small German stations situated on the creeks to the north of Duala, and then the West African Regiment, with other troops, proceeded up the Wuri river in barges towed by armed launches; in this expedition we suffered more from mosquitoes than

* A similar incident occurred in Togoland. See *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons*, by Brigadier-General F. J. Moberley, p. 34.

from the Germans. On the 8th October we attacked the town of Jabassi, but were driven back with some loss ; a week later the town was taken with comparative ease. After this the West African Regiment in various detachments took part in several skirmishes in different parts of the country ; my own company spent much of its time on the Wuri river between Jabassi and a blockhouse built lower down the river at Dibombe. In 1915 I was recalled to Lagos for civil duties, and was appointed Adjutant of the Nigeria Land Contingent. The Cameroons campaign was finally ended in February, 1916, when the last Germans in the south withdrew into Spanish territory (Muni) and the garrison of Mora, a mountain stronghold in the northern Cameroons, surrendered.

The Nigeria Land Contingent continued to train European civilians as reserve officers for the Nigeria Regiment, and many of those so trained served in the East African campaign with distinction. In this campaign the West African Frontier Force further distinguished itself and after its return to West Africa was organised for further service in Palestine ; the armistice of November, 1918, was signed, however, before the troops were ready to sail.

In 1918 I served with the Nigeria Regiment during the Egba rebellion, which for some time was very serious. The railway and many telegraph lines were cut ; a small force of police was besieged in Olumu, one of the railway stations only 28 miles from Lagos ; and the Lagos water supply pumping station at Iju was thought to be in danger. There were very few troops in Lagos, and a party of these sent to relieve Olumu in a specially "armoured" train was derailed and ambushed ; further troops were then sent from Lagos under my command, and Olumu was relieved. For a few days more the situation was tense, but the rebellion was crushed without much difficulty when reinforcements arrived from the north of Nigeria. The Egbas fought with great courage against hopeless odds, creeping up through the thick bush to fire their dane-guns* at short range into a line of troops advancing in single file along a bush-path and then running off to reload their cumbersome weapons. During the

* Smooth-bore muzzle-loading cap-guns, firing round shot, or more commonly bits of wire, sparklet bulbs, and other pieces of metal likely to cause very serious jagged wounds. At close range and in thick bush they are more deadly than rifles.

rebellion the Alake of Abeokuta took refuge from his people in the Catholic mission hospital at Abeokuta. The rebellion was due to many causes, of which taxation and changes in the system of administration were the most important. But the shortage of Administrative Officers, due to war conditions, was a contributing factor. Discontent and misunderstanding had time to grow and to become serious before the Government was aware of what was happening, and the rebellion, when it came, was a complete surprise.*

There were numerous slight disorders in Lagos from time to time which scarcely merited the name of riots. In 1913 the conviction of a popular politician (not for his political activities) led to some excitement. Unaware that there was any trouble, I was riding my bicycle along one of the streets of Lagos when I met a large and apparently very angry mob ; as I obviously could not ride through the mob, which occupied the whole width of the street, and as I did not feel inclined to retreat, I dismounted and waited to see what was going to happen. One of the leaders of the mob came forward and politely enquired whether I wished to pass, and then invited me to follow close behind him "in case any of the people might be rude" ; he then led me through the mob which let me pass wheeling my bicycle without any difficulty. This courtesy by so-called rioters was not exceptional. Some years later a Lagos mob, excited by dislike of a new water rate imposed by the Government, proceeded to the Government buildings and made a considerable noise in the street outside. Colonel Moorhouse, a very popular senior official, came out on to the verandah and held up his hand for silence, which immediately followed. He then asked the people what they wanted, and the answer came back, "Please, sir, we are a riot." To this Colonel Moorhouse replied that he was very busy that day, and that the people should return tomorrow when he would discuss the matter with them. The mob thought this reasonable and at once departed. Next day the mob failed to return, owing to the fact that some troops had been posted in reserve at the back of the Government buildings, but it was known that a large crowd had collected in another part of the town ; the senior police officer present was

* It is always dangerous and especially so in times of emergency, to deplete the Administrative staff, and during the war of 1939-45 the shortage of this staff in the Gold Coast caused me constant anxiety. See p. 207.

then sent to inform the mob that Colonel Moorhouse was waiting for them, and a little later the strange sight was seen of the "rioters" arriving, led by a police officer on his bicycle. After some conversation, which started with apologies to Colonel Moorhouse for keeping him waiting, the meeting dispersed without disorder. West African riots in former years were very different from those in the West Indies.

In 1928, when I was administering the Government of the Bahamas, there was a serious riot in the prison at Nassau. The prisoners had been allowed to get completely out of hand as the warders were afraid of them, with some reason perhaps, as there is no doubt that some of the warders had been stealing the prisoners' rations. Finally, all the warders but one ran out of the prison, locking the gate behind them, and when this was reported to me I went myself to the prison and took control. I was joined by the Chairman of the Prison Committee, the acting Colonial Secretary and a couple of other officials, and with a few armed police we entered the prison yard and called on the prisoners to surrender. A number of them did so and were removed for safety to the police station, and we entered the main building of the prison; here the damage done by the prisoners was considerable, everything possible had been broken and the doors of the cells had been forced open. At this stage a prisoner on one of the upper galleries of the building threw an axe at me, but another prisoner warned me in time to get out of the way. Further prisoners then surrendered and were removed, but a band of armed men retreated into a corner of the yard and defied us to come and take them, while some of them placed ladders against the walls of the prison and prepared to escape. The yard was, unfortunately, full of heaps of stones and broken bottles which were used by the prisoners as missiles; one struck me on the helmet and several of the police were injured. I warned the prisoners several times that if they continued to resist I should be obliged to give the order to fire, but they paid no attention. Finally, some of them, armed with axes, rushed forward on our small party, and I instructed the sergeant of police to fire; he fired two shots and one man was killed instantly. Resistance immediately ceased and I ordered the prisoners to come forward one by one with their hands

raised ; they did this and they were all handcuffed. Some of them refused to allow the police to handcuff them and asked me to do it. A Commission of Enquiry endorsed the action taken to suppress the riot, and I received later a letter from the Colonial Office in which approval of my action was intimated. The letter referred to the fact of my "refraining from giving the order to fire until you found it absolutely necessary to do so," and to my "prompt and effective handling of the situation."

I quote this pleasing tribute only to stress the fact that other civil (and military) officers, placed in equally difficult situations, and acting in precisely the same way as I did, have been less fortunate in the recognition given them. Their superiors, and ill-informed public opinion, have often been too hasty in imputing blame for action which was essential if disaster was not to follow. It is easy enough to exercise a balanced judgment when sitting in the safe seclusion of one's office, far from the maddened crowd, and with plenty of time in which to think. It is a different matter to face a mob with a handful of armed men, some of whom have perhaps already been knocked out by stones, with the knowledge that the party must be overwhelmed if the mob is allowed to get too close, and that, if the party were overwhelmed, further outrages would follow. Yet it is strange how little sympathy is wasted on the policeman injured in doing his duty, and how excited some people get when the rioter is knocked about in a baton charge.

Often, when a mob gets completely out of hand, and firing is deferred until too late, a great many people have to be shot before the situation can be controlled ; on such occasions it is usual to point out, quite truly, that if the responsible officer had caused one or two shots to be fired early in the proceedings, and killed perhaps one man, order would have been restored with a minimum of bloodshed. But, on the other hand, if one man had been shot at an early stage the riot would never have assumed serious proportions, and the officer would then have been blamed for firing too soon, and for shooting a man when there was no real danger of a serious riot. So the man on the spot, generally a hot spot, with little time to think his problem out, but pretty sure that he will be blamed for whatever action he takes, and hating the thought of taking a human

life (for even the hardened official is no butcher), has to decide on the exact moment when he should shoot. He may be right or he may be wrong in his decision, but I for one would hesitate to condemn an error of judgment in such matters unless I had been there to see for myself at the critical moment and was therefore competent to criticise. When I hear such criticism I wonder how the critic himself would have behaved in the same circumstances.

A typical case occurred during the so-called "women's riots" in south-eastern Nigeria at the end of 1929. At Opobo, a young officer of the Nigeria Regiment, with a few of his men, was attacked by a mob of about 1,500 women, with armed men in the background. Had he given the order to fire a single shot at an early stage, before the women came too close, it is probable that they would have scattered and fled (and he would almost certainly have been blamed for firing unnecessarily) ; yet who can blame him for hesitating to fire on a crowd of women ? But the women broke down the fence a few feet in front of the soldiers, and struck with sticks at the District Officer and the officer in command of the troops. It is said that some of them tried to drag the rifles from the hands of the soldiers, and that then the firing began which resulted in heavy casualties, more than thirty being killed and many more wounded. Technically, the officer was perhaps wrong to let the women come so close without firing on them ; in practice few of us would have acted differently.

A less exciting "riot" with which I had to deal while in the Bahamas occurred in Ragged Island. Here the coloured District Commissioner had made himself very unpopular with the local people, who stoned his house and threatened him. In response to his message asking for help I went by launch to Ragged Island with four policemen, and was met on arrival by a large crowd with whom I remonstrated on their unruly behaviour. I then invited some of the leaders to meet me in the schoolhouse, warned them of the consequences of disorder, and enlisted them as members of a peace preservation committee. They guaranteed that no further disorders would occur and they kept their word. By a curious coincidence, all the men I had selected for my committee were local preachers (a popular profession in the Bahamas) and their expressed their grati-

fication that I had picked all the "Reverends." We then walked in procession to the beach, led by the local band playing patriotic tunes, and I embarked after friendly farewells, without having found it necessary to land the small police detachment from the launch ; for his own sake the unpopular District Commissioner was moved to another island.

I was back in Nigeria at the time of the "women's riots" referred to above, but I saw nothing of them. These riots, which occurred at Aba and other places in the Southern Provinces east of the Niger, were for a time very serious. There is no doubt that the women had been told by their menfolk that the British officials would never give the order for fire to be opened on the fair sex, and that the men were waiting to see what would happen, ready to take action themselves if the outlook was promising.* But the frenzied† women went too far and the troops who were called in to help the police were forced to fire on several occasions, and gradually the rioting ceased. The cause of these riots was undoubtedly the widespread belief that the Government was going to impose a head tax on women, similar to the unpopular tax on men which had been imposed some years before. At the same time the riots gave the women an opportunity to show their dislike for the Government-appointed "warrant chiefs,"‡ and the Native Courts. In some cases Europeans were attacked ; in other cases the leaders of the women protected them from the mob. In one case a special guard of women was placed over the building where the District Officer was living, while the rest of the women set fire to the court house. Not very long after the disorders had ceased my wife and I drove through this area by car and were everywhere greeted in the most friendly way, which again proves how ready the African is to let bygones be bygones.

At the end of 1924, when I arrived in British Honduras as Governor, there was every indication of trouble brewing. Just

* About 30 to 40 men armed with matchets were behind the mob of women at Opobo, during the fracas there.

† One officer, with experience of mobs in India and Ireland, said he had never "seen crowds in such a state of frenzy or so much out of hand."

‡ Men appointed by warrant to exercise power as Native Authorities. In many cases they were not Chiefs by Native custom, and were regarded by the people as no more than Government officials, as in fact they were.

before I came there had been rioting in Belize, and the rioters were still being tried in the courts. The hurricane of 1931 had caused great suffering, while unemployment had increased to a dangerous extent and there is no doubt that many of the people were close to starvation. I was fortunately able to obtain grants from the Colonial Development Fund for the construction of roads and for other purposes, and this helped materially to reduce unemployment, but it did not stop the discontent entirely. Meetings were held almost every evening in public places, and there orators delivered impassioned addresses. Most of the listeners laughed at the wild things that were said (for coloured people have a great deal of common sense) but there were others who believed them, and for some time the situation was tense. Many of the most violent agitators were men who had never done a serious day's work in their lives and shrank with horror from any offer of employment. Many of them also were a little mad.

Throughout this difficult time the police force behaved admirably, and I made it clear that I would support the police in the maintenance of order. From time to time detachments had to be sent to other towns in the colony to act as a check on possible disturbances, fomented in every case by agitators from Belize who realised they had no chance of success at headquarters but hoped to catch the Government napping at another place. At each meeting of the people a collection was taken up and although little was collected it was sufficient to keep the professional agitators and to save them the trouble of working. One of them, also, was undoubtedly subsidised by a prominent coloured member of the community. But I am glad to say that during the five years I was in the colony, while riots occurred in the neighbouring colony of Jamaica and in practically every other West Indian colony, there was no rioting in British Honduras.

I found on arrival in the colony that the ex-Service men of British Honduras were under a cloud, owing to the fact that they had rioted after their demobilisation in 1919. Some of them undoubtedly were a bad lot, with a holy terror of honest work, and a tendency to consider that they were entitled to be supported for the rest of their lives in happy idleness by a grateful country; many of these men

had never been near the front line. On the other hand, there were some who deserved a better fate than to be classed with the work-shy trouble-makers and these men I tried to help. I gave instructions that a proportion of those employed on relief works should be ex-Service men, and I endeavoured, by inviting ex-Service men to be present at King's Birthday parades, and renewing their medal ribands, to give them some pride in themselves. I am happy to say that the results were good, and throughout my time in British Honduras I received loyal support from these old soldiers. When I was leaving the colony their Association presented me with a mahogany bowl and a walking stick, both of local manufacture, which I still have and greatly value.

I was on leave in England in 1939, and when it was certain that war was coming I was ordered to return as quickly as possible to British Honduras. I left Southampton in the *Queen Mary* on the 30th August, on what was her last pre-war trip across the Atlantic as a passenger ship. I was fortunate enough to get a cabin, which I shared with another passenger ; as he apparently did not wake up for the first two days, and never appeared in the cabin for the last three days or nights, he was very little trouble. Most of the public rooms were used as dormitories, and had camp-beds put up in them. The ship was crowded, mostly with Americans who were anxious to return home before the fighting began in Europe. By official instructions my name, and that of every other British official on board, was omitted from the printed passenger list, and one evening, at a cocktail party in the captain's room, I was introduced to an American lady ; she had the passenger list with her, and rapidly scanned it to check my name. Not finding it, she asked me, in a conspiratorial whisper, what was my *real* name ; when I assured her that it was Burns, she said, "Yes, yes, I know, and I won't betray you, but do tell me what your real name is." A friend, who overheard her, whispered to her that my name really was Adolf Hitler, and she never spoke to either of us again, which was a pity as she was very easy on the eye.

The day before we reached New York two cruisers appeared on the horizon and rapidly approached us ; at first some of the passengers were alarmed at the thought that they might be German, but then

they made up their minds that Uncle Sam had sent his ships to look after us. The few British passengers on board were very pleased when they saw the white ensigns on the cruisers, a comforting sight at sea. The night of the 2nd September, when the telegrams suggested that war was not a certainty, was a very unhappy one for the British passengers who feared a further attempt at appeasement, but in the morning the steward arriving with my tea was wreathed in smiles as he informed me that we were at war. When I arrived in New York* I was fortunate in getting a quick air passage to British Honduras, which I reached in eight days after leaving England. The Defence Scheme had fortunately been revised quite recently, and the necessary measures were taken without delay. There were, at that time, over two thousand Germans resident in Guatemala, and there was always the danger of a raid by them into the colony which at that time was defended only by a company of volunteers and the armed police ; however, nothing happened.

Before the end of the year I returned to England† for duty in the Colonial Office, and in the summer of 1940 I joined the Colonial Office company of the Home Guard, and also did fire-watching in the block of flats in which I was living. My wife and I were in London throughout the blitz period, and were fortunate in suffering nothing worse than the breaking of our windows and the cutting off of our gas supply for many weeks, which made cooking almost impossible.

At the end of 1941 I assumed duty in the Gold Coast, which was completely surrounded by potentially hostile Vichy territory. There was always the possibility that we should be attacked, although I feel sure that at no time did the Vichy French in West Africa wish for anything more than to be left alone. There might have been some danger of successful invasion while the bulk of the Gold Coast Regiment was serving in East Africa, but after their return at the end of 1941 I am quite sure that nothing the Vichy French could have sent against us would have given much trouble.

The local Home Guard, of Europeans and Africans, was badly

* During the one evening I spent in New York I visited the World Fair.

† I travelled by a United Fruit Company steamer from Puerto Barrios (Guatemala), via two ports in the Republic of Honduras, to New York, where I was fortunate enough to catch a steamer for England within two hours.

armed at first, but the men were keen and as efficient as was possible in the circumstances. So also were the A.R.P. services, and the civil population of the Gold Coast has no reason to be ashamed of its achievements during the war.

The Gold Coast has a bad reputation for wars and civil disturbances. Between 1806 and 1900 there were no less than seven wars between the British and the Fanti people of the coast on one side and the Ashantis on the other. The Ashantis were a fighting race, and, but for British intervention, there is no doubt that they would have conquered the whole country. In 1807 they attacked and massacred the inhabitants of the coast town of Anamabu, and very nearly took the British fort there. In 1824 they defeated a British force and killed the Governor, Sir Charles MacCarthy, who was in command ; it is said (and denied) that his skull is still in the possession of the Ashantis. Two years later a combined British and Fanti force defeated the Ashantis decisively in a battle twenty miles from Accra, but in 1873 an Ashanti army reached the coast again at Elmina, where they were defeated. The following year a British army, under Sir Garnet (afterwards Lord) Wolseley, who was for a short time Governor of the Gold Coast, attacked the Ashantis and captured their capital, Kumasi. Again in 1896 there was trouble, Kumasi was once more occupied, and the King, Prempeh, was deposed and deported. In 1900 the Ashantis besieged a small British garrison in the fort at Kumasi during a visit by the Governor, but the rising was crushed and Ashanti was annexed to the British Crown as a colony.

Apart from those with Ashanti there were no local wars of any consequence, but there have been, and unfortunately still are, numerous civil disturbances. Some of them were "agin the Government," such for example as that at Cape Coast which was one of the reasons for the transfer of the headquarters from that town to Accra. But most of the disturbances are due to local stool disputes* and company† fights. The supporters of rival claimants to the stool will abuse one another until tempers are lost and fighting begins ; guns and matchets are freely used, and before the police can interfere

* See p. 202.

† There are several Companies in the various States of the Gold Coast. Originally a military unit, the Company has now purely social and ceremonial duties, and a certain say in the election of a chief.

several persons have been killed. Such a case occurred at Shama in October, 1942, when four men were killed in an affray between the supporters of two rival candidates for the stool. A fight may also start through the members of one company flaunting a flag or other device which is considered to be insulting to another company, although *why* it should be thought insulting is never very clear. At Winneba, for instance, in August, 1941, the immediate cause of a company fight was the wearing of a brass helmet by the leader of one company; the police arrested some of the rioters and an attempt by the crowd to rescue them led to six persons being killed. But whatever the causes of these fights may be, they are costly in human lives and suffering, they are disturbing to the general peace and security of the people, and they interfere to a considerable extent with the trade and progress of the community. As a rule, when a District Commissioner or the police arrive on the scene both sides come forward with assurances of their own peaceful nature and intentions, and accusations against the other side of unprovoked insults and assaults; but there are occasions when the police are attacked by both sides for interfering in a private quarrel and spoiling the fun.

At my first meeting with the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast, in September, 1942, I referred to the numerous stool disputes and the disorders which so frequently attended them; I pointed out that during the few months I had been in the colony there had actually been several such incidents, and I made it plain that these disorders would not be permitted and would be put down with a strong hand. The action I took, which had a good effect, was to apply the Peace Preservation Ordinance in any area where there had been rioting, which involved the surrender of all firearms, and to station in that area, at the expense of the community concerned, a strong body of police. I also endeavoured* to reduce the number of stool disputes, which were the greatest cause of civil disturbances.

The Gold Coast suffered little, except indirectly, from the effects of the war of 1939-45. Prices rose to fantastic heights, and there was great difficulty in obtaining certain kinds of imported food and cloth. But no bombs fell in the colony, and there was no invasion

* See p. 204.

by hostile troops. On the other hand the colony was invaded by numerous representatives of British ministries and by the American army. It was amazing, at a time when the colonial government could get no staff to carry on the routine administration of the country and to cope with the additional work caused by war conditions, how these ministries could find so many men for work which many of us thought quite unnecessary. The colony swarmed with experts, representing different ministries, who quarrelled with one another as to who was responsible for what and took themselves very seriously indeed. The "hush-hush" people were particularly amusing. A letter once arrived at Government House addressed to a letter and number, call it B237, c/o the Governor of the Gold Coast; one of the many heads of the secret gang was asked to let me know who B237 was, but replied that he did not feel justified in telling me, so the letter remained in my safe until B237 came and confessed his identity. On another occasion, when I was administering the government of Nigeria in 1942, one of the chief "hush-hush" men instructed one of my own officers not to give me certain information; *that* was soon dealt with. The most notorious of these fancy parties was the West African Broadcasting Unit, which, against my strongest recommendation, was sent out to Accra to broadcast to French West Africa; the members of the Unit began to quarrel among themselves almost as soon as they arrived and very soon they were all recalled. In the meantime they had taken up much-wanted berths on steamers, badly overcrowded housing accommodation in Accra, and a great deal of the British taxpayers' money had been wasted on this organisation.

Apart from the shortage of colonial government staff, it was extremely difficult for colonial officials and their wives to get passages on steamers, and the difficulties of staffing were much increased by this. No such difficulty was experienced by the staffs of these fancy organisations, and quite junior members of these staffs would be provided with air passages in preference to colonial civil servants of standing. Lest it should be thought that these comments represent only the narrow view of a colonial governor, let me say that similar views were held by the members of each of the fancy organisations as regards all the others; some of the more honest of them confessed

that they had no work to do. There must have been many who regretted the termination of the war and the end of their little brief authority.

The representatives of the fighting services, on the other hand, were quite different to deal with. They knew what they had to do and they did it well, in full co-operation with the civil administration. Accra was the headquarters of the military command in West Africa, and G.H.Q. was installed in some of the buildings of Achimota College. The Army and the R.A.F. took over a great number of buildings belonging to the civil administration, but we always found them considerate and reasonable to deal with. The Royal Navy, with their local headquarters at Takoradi, gave very little trouble and were adaptable as only the Navy can be.

The Americans were something of a problem. They had a big job to do but they had a great many men to do it. Their discipline improved towards the end but at first it was deplorable. I am afraid that the reputation of the American Army was lowered locally by a number of untrained soldiers in uniform. One officer, under the influence of drink, fired his revolver at a taxi-driver and missed him, but shot dead an inoffensive African clerk. The driver of a motor-lorry, just before dusk, drove right through a platoon of troops, killing one British and eleven African other ranks; and injuring forty-one others; he drove on without stopping and put his lorry away in the garage at the American camp without reporting the incident. In both these homicide cases the accused was convicted by American courts-martial and received sentences of three and three and a half years imprisonment respectively. Needless to say these incidents created much feeling locally, and the behaviour of the Americans was contrasted very unfavourably, by local opinion, with that of the British troops.* I feel that I should add that at all times the American Consular representatives in the Gold Coast were most helpful; they were particularly nice men, and must have regretted, even more than the British did, the behaviour of their compatriots.

* Anyone who regards these remarks as merely those of a prejudiced "Britisher" is invited to refer to the article by an American reporter in *Life* of the 10th December, 1945.

CHAPTER XI

COLONIAL LEGISLATURES

THE first colonial legislature I ever saw at work was the Legislative Council of St. Kitts-Nevis. There was a majority of government officials, and, at that time, all the unofficial members were appointed by the Governor ; most of them were white men, but there were two very able coloured members, one an estate proprietor and the other a merchant. The Administrator of the Presidency presided except on the rare occasions when the Governor of the Leeward Islands was present.

When they were separate colonies,* both St. Kitts (or St. Christopher, as it would then have generally been called) and Nevis, like the other British West Indies, had full-blown parliaments on the Westminster model. There was an Upper House, known as the Legislative Council, of which all the members were appointed by the Governor, and a House of Assembly, with members elected on a narrow franchise ; all the members of the two Houses and practically all the electors would have been white, and the planter interest almost the only one represented.

The records of the Council and of the House of Assembly were preserved (more or less) in large leather-bound books ; the ink used was good and the handwriting beautiful, and these old minutes of meetings held one or two centuries ago made fascinating reading ; I took many notes of passages that struck my fancy. The most interesting were those which referred to the French wars. There is a copy of a letter from Admiral Rodney, dated from Barbados, the 19th June, 1781, warning the Governor of the possible descent upon the Leeward Islands of the French fleet, and adding : "I have not the least doubt but that the inhabitants of the Leeward Islands will act like Britons, and not meanly submit to an Enemy's summons, they can depend upon the assistance of the Fleet under my Command." In spite of this assurance a powerful French fleet and army were able to attack St. Kitts and, after a prolonged siege, to secure the capitulation.

* See p. 12.

lation of Brimstone Hill, where the garrison and militia had held out until all hope of relief had to be given up. The minutes contain the terms of the Capitulation, which was signed on the 12th February, 1782 (three months before Rodney defeated DeGrasse at the Battle of the Saints). The first article reads as follows :

"The Governor, the Commander of the Troops, the Regular Officers and Soldiers, the Officers and Privates of the Militia, shall march thro' the Breach on the Fort of Brimstone Hill with all the Honors of War, with Drums Beating, Colours Flying, One Mortar, two brass field Pieces, ten rounds each, Arms and Baggage, and then lay down their Arms at a place appointed, the Officers excepted."

The Council and the House of Assembly continued to meet and to do business, although there was now a French Governor of the island, but troubles soon arose. The French Governor ordered that the people of St. Kitts should pay the sum of 33,566 livres as compensation for the loss of the French schooner *Catharine*, which had been lying, with a valuable cargo, in the roadstead of Basseterre, when a "set of villains" from the island surprised and murdered the crew and carried the vessel off to the nearest British port. The Council and Assembly met at once and resolved unanimously *not* to pay ; the Court House, where they met, was then surrounded by an armed guard, they were not allowed to have their dinner, and the jail was prepared for the reception of the members, who were informed that they would receive the usual prisoners' rations, salt beef and bread, during their imprisonment. In the meantime the Treasurer, who was warned that his personal property would be seized if the money were not forthcoming from the public chest, gave a Note of Hand for the amount and the members were released ; the minutes of the meeting end with the significant words "House broke up," and we can imagine the rush of the hungry and indignant members to their dinner.

This dinner appears to have been a perquisite of the members. In 1780 a resolution was passed that whenever there was a meeting of the Council and Assembly a dinner should be provided for thirty gentlemen at the public expense, provided that the cost did not amount to more than £24 15s. od. In most colonies the members of the Legislature now receive travelling allowance when they attend

meetings, and it is the privilege of the Governor to entertain them at dinner on one night during the session.

In these days, when the politically-minded West Indians are clamouring for the restoration of their old constitutions, it is interesting to recall the circumstances in which these constitutions were given up, except in Barbados, the Bahamas, and Bermuda,* where (at any rate until lately) the whites still controlled the political machine. In the days when practically all the coloured inhabitants were slaves, and as such did not count politically, the members of the elected Houses of Assembly, and their constituents, were Englishmen, who had been granted constitutions based on the existing constitution of the country from which they came; they understood the working of this constitution and the value of compromise and, although there was frequent friction between the Governor and the British Government on the one side, and the elected representatives of the colonists on the other, the constitution did, in practice, work sufficiently well. But it worked for the benefit of the white planters and their friends, and little was done for the coloured inhabitants, even after the abolition of slavery.† Gradually, as the white population grew smaller and the number of coloured electors increased, the planters saw the danger of the coloured element securing a majority in the House of Assembly. Much as they disliked control from Downing Street through the Governor, they disliked still more the possibility of a coloured legislature, manned by the descendants of their former slaves. The British Government also was anxious to secure control of the legislature, by which means alone would it be possible to pass the legislation necessary to secure the social reforms which were the logical results of emancipation.

It should be noted that the abandonment of the old constitutions and the substitution of Crown Colony government was not forced upon the West Indian colonies; it was the deliberate act of the white citizens of these colonies, who alone, in practice, controlled the political machine of those days. This point was emphasised in a despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies (The Duke of

* The "three Bs."

† Leonard Barnes, in his book *The Duty of Empire*, p. 124, points out that it was only with the establishment of Crown Colony government that the Negroes really began to taste the proper fruits of emancipation from slavery.

Buckingham) dated the 17th August, 1868, in which also he insisted that, if the British Government was to be responsible for effective government of the colonies, it must, in the last resort, have the necessary power to pass such measures as it deemed essential ; this could only be secured in a legislature where a majority of the members could be relied upon to support the government. The method adopted was the abolition of the two-Chamber legislature, and the appointment to the single Chamber which took its place of a majority of government officials. It mattered little whether the unofficials who comprised the minority were nominated by the Governor or elected by the people : the essence of Crown Colony government, as it came to be called, was the official majority which ensured the safe passage of government-sponsored legislation and complete control of the finances.

Slavery was abolished in the British colonies by an Act passed in 1833, and some thirty years later the old constitutions of the West Indian islands began to go ; by the end of the century only Barbados, the Bahamas, and Bermuda retained the old models. In 1866 the two Houses of the St. Kitts legislature were amalgamated into a single Legislative Assembly, partly nominated and partly elected. In 1878 the elective principle was abolished, and the Legislative Council, as I knew it, came into being. (In recent years the constitution has again been changed, and there are now five elected members, three nominated unofficial members, and two official members in addition to the Administrator, who is the President of the Council).

The federal colony of the Leeward islands, when I served there, consisted of the separate Presidencies of Antigua, the headquarters of the Governor, St. Kitts-Nevis, Dominica,* Montserrat, and the Virgin Islands. Each of these, except the Virgin Islands, had its own Legislative Council, and there was in addition a General Legislative Council for the colony.† As all of these councils were law-making machines, and as many of the old laws passed under the separate constitutions of the individual islands were still extant, it was no easy matter to ascertain what laws were actually in force. In the Presi-

* Dominica is now one of the Windward Islands.

† Both my grandfather and my father had been members of this Council, as well as of one or more of the Presidential legislatures.

dency of St. Kitts-Nevis, for example, there were no less than four different sets of laws in force : (a) those of the federal Colony of the Leeward Islands, dating from 1872 ; (b) the laws of St. Kitts, passed between 1723 and 1882, which applied only to that island and its dependency, Anguilla ; (c) the laws of Nevis, passed between 1681 and 1882, which applied only to Nevis ; and (d) the laws of the united Presidency of St. Kitts-Nevis, which date from 1882. In these circumstances, my friend Dudley Semper and I decided that there was a need for some guide in this legal labyrinth, and in 1911 we brought out an *Index to the Titles of the Laws of the Leeward Islands and its Presidencies*. Semper was then Registrar of the Supreme Court and I was clerk to the Magistrate ; his contribution to the work was the more valuable.

When I was transferred to Southern Nigeria in 1912 I found there a Legislative Council similar to that in the Leeward Islands. When Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, he retained a Legislative Council for the small *Colony* of Nigeria only, which included the town of Lagos and a very small area around it ; for the rest of the country, which formed the Protectorate of Nigeria, the Governor was the sole legislator. At the same time he set up the Nigerian Council, an advisory body which included officials and European unofficials, with African chiefs and other representatives. In practice the chiefs from the Northern Provinces of Nigeria never attended and, as they knew no English, could in any case have taken little part in the debates. The Nigerian Council was devised to afford a channel of expression for public opinion, but it had no power over legislation or finance and it was regarded generally as nothing more than a debating society. During the regime of Lord Lugard's successor, Sir Hugh Clifford, the Nigerian Council and the small (Colony) Legislative Council were abolished and a larger Legislative Council was set up which included a number of nominated unofficial members from the Protectorate and four elected members to represent the towns of Lagos and Calabar ; there was also a sufficient number of government members to ensure an official majority. This Council legislated for the Colony and Southern Provinces of the Protectorate, while the Governor alone enacted laws for the Northern Provinces ; the Estimates for the

whole country, however, came within the purview of the Council. The first elections to this Council took place in September, 1923; they were the first in British West Africa.

It is the custom for the Governor of a colony to open the budget session of the legislature with an Address, which contains not only an outline of government's intentions for the coming year, but also an account of departmental activities during the year just past. Some Governors (I was one of these) have the review of the past year's activities printed and circulated as an appendix to the Address, and make the Address itself mercifully brief, but it was the practice of others to read to the patient members of Council the whole of their lengthy Addresses. It was always a pleasure to listen to, or to read, the Addresses of Sir Hugh Clifford, in spite of their length; they were always in beautiful English, and full of "meat."*

The most remarkable thing about the Nigerian Legislative Council was the number of Questions asked. One of the African members was notorious for this, and I believe that he actually on one occasion asked over one hundred Questions at a single meeting. Fortunately, in those colonial legislatures of which I have knowledge, the art of Supplementary Questions was not practised.

In 1924 I was transferred to the Bahamas as Colonial Secretary, and I had to adjust my mind to an entirely different form of colonial administration from anything I had known before. Instead of the Governor having (as in the Leeward Islands and Nigeria) absolute local control of the administration, he had in the Bahamas a definitely limited authority. In the Crown Colonies which I had known the Governor had only to satisfy the Secretary of State on any point of policy or development, confident in his power to carry the point in a Legislative Council which he controlled by the official majority vote. In the Bahamas he had to satisfy a legislature which was always suspicious of his motives and determined to assert its independence.

This colony is one of "the three Bs" which still retain their old constitutions. The Bahamas legislature, which dates from 1729, is

* I still have, and value, four of Sir Hugh Clifford's Addresses, in each of which he inscribed a friendly note. One of these he sent to me "with all good wishes and many thanks for much assistance frequently given."

typical of those existing under the old colonial constitutions based on the Westminster model ; it provides for a nominated Legislative Council, and a House of Assembly of 29 members elected for 15 districts. The House of Assembly keeps a tight hold on the public purse, and in various ways attempts also to control the functions of the Executive. As recently as 1944* it refused to extend the principle of the secret ballot to the "Out Islands," in spite of the expressed wishes of the British Government, conveyed through the Governor, the Duke of Windsor, but the necessary legislation was passed in 1946.

It is usual for the Colonial Secretary to be nominated by the Governor to be a member of the "Upper House," the Legislative Council, but it seemed to me that I could be of more use in the House of Assembly, which held the real power, and that I should find the membership of that House more interesting and amusing ; I therefore asked the Governor (Sir Harry Cordeaux) not to appoint me to the Legislative Council as he had intended to do, but to allow me to seek election to the House of Assembly. Although he was very doubtful of my chances of success he agreed to my request and one of the members of the House, Mr. C. E. Bethell, who represented the Western District of New Providence, resigned his seat and urged his former constituents to elect me in his place. He was good enough to speak very flatteringly of me and to assure the electors that I would represent them efficiently ; as I had not been in the colony long enough for them to know me, they accepted his assurances and elected me.

I was the first official to be elected to the House of Assembly for many years and none has been elected since. Of the 29 members there were usually two or three who, as unofficial members of the Executive Council, were known as the Government members, and the senior of them was the Leader of the House. As Colonial Secretary I was the senior member of the Executive Council and therefore became Leader of the House ; in doing so I unfortunately deprived one of the unofficial members of Executive Council of this distinction, which he had held for some time, and he did not like it.

As Leader it was my duty to present Messages from the Governor,

* As in 1925 ; see p. 270.

and to introduce Government Bills. It was no easy matter to get these passed, as the Government members never exceeded four, and the unofficial majority was easily persuaded to vote against the Government, which, on general principles, was always suspected of sinister motives. For this reason, no doubt, measures designed to improve the sanitation of Nassau were rejected with great regularity for several years, and it was only because of the panic due to an epidemic of typhoid in 1927, which gravely affected the reputation of the Bahamas as a health resort and threatened the tourist industry, that the Government was able to get an Act passed providing for a sewerage system.* A measure that I tried to put through to compel a father to support his illegitimate children was rejected by the House of Assembly, on the grounds that the women were so bad that no man would be free from the danger of being dragged into court !

The debates were always lively and often acrimonious, but there was seldom personal animosity against political opponents ; many rude things were said of me in the House, but I hope I gave as good measure as I received, and no one was a penny the worse. The meetings were presided over, with great dignity and efficiency, by the Speaker, Mr. Harcourt Malcolm, who was an expert on parliamentary procedure, and a determined protagonist of the Bahamas constitution and the "rights" of the House of Assembly. The entry of the Speaker, wearing a black robe and a full-bottomed wig, and preceded by the Mace, into the Bahamas House of Assembly was as dignified as anything I have ever seen. All the ceremonial, as well as the procedure, of the local legislature was based on that of Westminster ; when the Governor came down to the Legislative Council to open the Sessions, or to give his assent to Bills, he sent his Aide-de-Camp to the other House, the doors of which were at first closed against him, to summon the members of the Assembly, who then walked in procession, led by the Mace and Speaker, to the Council Chamber. This ceremony always attracted a large crowd, which included numbers of American tourists.

The people of the Bahamas were naturally very proud of their

* See p. 274.

ancient constitution, and the fact that they had been able to preserve a virtual independence of the Colonial Office ; they regarded with pity and disdain the less fortunate Crown Colonies. I have heard a member of the House of Assembly ask "Who is the Secretary of State for the Colonies ?" and proceed to explain that this gentleman had no standing in the House. It has been pointed out to me more than once that all the West Indian Crown Colonies (except Trinidad, which had grown rich through its oil-wells) were impoverished and bankrupt, owing to Colonial Office control, while the Bahamas, with Barbados and Bermuda, thanks to the independence of the local legislature, paid its way. It is a fact that "the three Bs" have not had to call on the British Treasury for financial assistance as most of the other West Indian colonies have had to do, and that they are comparatively well off, but a careful study of facts will reveal other reasons than the absence of Colonial Office control for this state of affairs. In the case of the Bahamas, for instance, a fortunate geographical position has been an important factor. The winter climate is delightful, and the islands lie within easy distance of the American mainland, so the tourist traffic is large and valuable. Until the beginning of the 18th century the Bahamas were the headquarters of numerous pirates, while later the business of wrecking was practised. (Most of the lighthouses in the Bahamas are to this day under the control of the Board of Trade). Later again, the Bahamas were used as a base by ships running the blockade of the Confederate ports during the American Civil War, and during the times of prohibition the islands did a roaring trade in the sale of spirits to bootleggers. But apart from these facts, and the revenue that has accrued to the Bahamas as a result of them, it is possible to ask whether the expenditure has not been kept down by the refusal of the legislature to spend money on social developments. The people of Nassau, the capital, both the merchants of Bay Street and the coloured majority, have made much money out of the tourist traffic, on the development of which a large proportion of the annual revenue is spent,* but the people of the Out Islands† have had very little done for them and conditions in most of these islands, at the

* Considerable sums have also been sunk in hotels and other amenities for visitors.

† Who comprise about three-quarters of the total population of the colony.

time when I knew them, were deplorable ; they are probably little better today.

The reasons for this state of affairs are quite obvious. To begin with, the Out Islands are, as a rule, represented in the House of Assembly by persons who live in Nassau and seldom visit their constituencies except during an election. When I was in the Bahamas I visited every one of the inhabited Out Islands, and knew them better, I think, than any of the other members of the House of Assembly, few of whom went further than Harbour Island and Eleuthera, which are within easy reach of Nassau. I did my utmost to persuade the House to consider some definite plan for the development of the Out Islands, and did actually succeed in getting a grant for a main road in Eleuthera, but the House preferred generally to pass an annual Out Islands Appropriation Act, which included a number of small doles to each island ; the members for each Out Island constituency insisted on a fair share of the spoils for his own island, but there was no planning and no coherent policy.

But the main cause of the trouble was the absence of a secret ballot, and the open corruption that attended the elections of members. While I was in the Bahamas there was open voting everywhere and my attempt in 1925, with the Governor's authority, to have the question of a secret ballot referred to a Select Committee with a view to the passing of the necessary legislation, was easily defeated, only one other white man voting with me for the motion. Since then the secret ballot was introduced for elections in New Providence (the main island, on which Nassau stands), but, as I stated above, a proposal to extend the principle to the Out Islands was rejected by the House of Assembly in 1944, and was only accepted in 1946. The method adopted for the open voting gave every opportunity for bribery and intimidation. The elector was asked by the Returning Officer, in the presence of the candidates or their agents, for whom he voted, and his choice was noted down. No attempt was made, in conversation, to conceal the fact that electors were given bribes and this was regarded by most of the people in the Bahamas as rather a good joke. There was little danger of the unsuccessful candidate making trouble, for he himself had probably been guilty of bribery just as bad, though not as successful, as his

rival's.* The police were powerless in the face of a public opinion which regarded bribery as something rather clever. The price of a vote in certain constituencies was well known, and the electors looked forward to an election which promised them money, unlimited rum, and a great deal of fun. Apart from the actual cash paid out in bribes, the candidate who owned a shop was able, by the grant or withholding of credit, to influence the votes of the electors. When I stood for election to the House of Assembly I was asked quite openly how much I was prepared to pay out in bribes for the privilege of becoming a member; when I replied that I did not propose to pay anything, and that I thought my constituents would be lucky to have such a good representative, they were so taken aback that they agreed with me.

Not only was the bribery open and unashamed, but stronger measures were taken when necessary. When an Englishman, unpopular with the white political leaders, sought election in one of the Out Islands, he found it strangely difficult to hire a launch to take him to his intended constituency; when he did secure one the engines were tampered with. But this was a comparatively honest way of disposing of a rival candidate, and less objectionable than bribery, which debased both those who offered the bribes and the coloured voters who accepted them to their own ultimate loss. For the immediate result of these questionable transactions was the return to the House of Assembly of an overwhelming majority of white members, most of them merchants, who looked after their own interests first. When I was in the Bahamas, there were, I think, nine coloured members in a house of twenty-nine, although, if there had been instead only nine white members the whites would have been over-represented in proportion to their numbers in the total population of the colony.

But when all this has been taken into consideration, one cannot help a reluctant admiration for the white inhabitants of the Bahamas, who have held their privileged position against great odds, in the firm belief that a coloured majority in the House of Assembly would

* This reminds me of a story which I thought very amusing when I heard it. In some colony, I think it was Ceylon, one man sued another in Court for a debt, and used a forged promissory note as evidence: the defendant replied to this with a forged receipt.

ruin the colony ; they may be right in thinking this, but the alternative to white control of the legislature would probably in the past have been a form of Crown Colony government (which the whites, at least, would think almost as bad). Nor can the coloured section of the population be held blameless for the present position, as it is they, after all, who received most of the bribes.

We have then in the Bahamas a constitution which places all financial responsibility in the hands of a House of Assembly controlled (in my day, and probably still) by a minority of the population, and gives to the Governor only the power of veto and such executive powers as he can exercise without money, or with such sums of money as he may be trusted with by a suspicious and reluctant legislature. In theory such a constitution should be quite unworkable, but, as Mr. Harcourt Malcolm has pointed out,* it did in fact work, and had worked for more than two centuries, thanks probably to the British capacity for compromise.

There was one incident, in 1928, when the constitution nearly broke down owing to a dispute between the Governor (who was supported by the Legislative Council) and the House of Assembly. I cannot remember all the details, but the trouble began with some objections by the Legislative Council to the provisions of a money Bill passed by the Lower House, and delay by the Council in passing it. The House of Assembly, believing that the Council would reject the Bill, and determined that the money provisions it contained should get through, inserted them in the annual Appropriation Bill, which was duly passed by both Houses ; but the Council also passed the first Bill, and the House of Assembly found that it had been too clever and had voted twice as much money as it had intended to do. A few nights later the Governor, Sir Charles Orr, came down to the Legislative Council to give his assent to the Bills passed during the Session, and the House of Assembly, duly summoned, came over to the Council Chamber led by the Speaker, Harcourt Malcolm. It was the custom for the Speaker to hand to the Governor, one by one, the Bills that had been passed, and for the Governor (who had already received from the Attorney General a certificate that the Bill was in order for his assent) to sign each then and there, or state that he

* *A History of the Bahamas House of Assembly*, p. 68.

reserved any particular Bill for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure. Malcolm proceeded to hand all the Bills he had with him to the Governor, who gave his assent to each, but he did not present the money Bill referred to above. The Governor then asked him whether there was not another Bill for signature, and Malcolm replied, with a lack of courtesy which was uncharacteristic of him, that the Governor could "find that out only in one way—the constitutional way." This, of course, was absurd, as the Governor knew from the Attorney General's certificate of the existence of any Bill passed. Next day the Governor dissolved the House, and writs were issued for a new election, Sir Charles Orr proceeding to England on leave immediately afterwards, and the administration of the government devolving on me. With the dissolution of the House the custody of all its papers was the responsibility of the Clerk, and he surrendered the Bill to me on a written demand that he should do so. In the meantime great excitement reigned throughout the colony, and, except for the members of the Legislative Council, most of the politically-minded people supported Malcolm in the matter; the elections resulted in the return, unopposed, of all the old members (except myself; I did not stand for re-election). In due course, with the House of Assembly reconstituted, it became necessary for a Speaker to be elected, and it got to be known that I had no intention of approving the election of Malcolm in view of his rudeness to the Governor. Malcolm came to see me and asked what I proposed to do; I informed him that I should certainly not approve of his election unless he first apologised. After some hesitation he wrote out a document which I refused to accept as an apology, but later he signed a letter with which I was satisfied and agreed to publish it in a local newspaper. This he did, to the great annoyance of the other members of the House of Assembly, who considered that he had let them down after they had supported him, and it was touch and go whether he would, after all, be elected. However, he was elected, and I approved the choice of the House, when later, in accordance with precedent, he informed me of his election and sought my approval. And so the storm blew over.

Had I been forced to refuse my approval of his election it would have been the first time since 1753 that such a thing had occurred in

the Bahamas.* In deciding to accept Malcolm as Speaker, after due apology, I was influenced by the undoubted fact that he was the most suitable person in the colony to hold that office, and that if he lost the position of Speaker, which he greatly valued, he would thereafter have been a virulent and effective opponent of the government, and would have been regarded as a political martyr. As it was, by his apology, he lost to a great extent the influence he had formerly exercised in the political life of the colony, an influence directed, as a rule, towards weakening the powers of the executive.

There were many interesting customs and amusing incidents in the Bahamas House of Assembly. Instead of "those in favour" saying "Aye," the Speaker would put a motion by saying "Those in favour will sit, the contrary will rise," which saved the majority a great deal of trouble, and imposed on the recalcitrant minority the effort of standing up. In the Bahamas House of Assembly it was permissible to move as an amendment the direct negative to a Question, and this was generally done by the opponents of a measure, who thereby gave the supporters of the original question the trouble of rising, by forcing them into the position of voting against the counter-motion; I was told by one member that this was a useful political manoeuvre, as the member who was lukewarm on any particular question would sometimes not take the trouble to rise.

Some of the speeches contained real gems. One member, opposing a Government Bill, warned the House against its dangers; "Mr. Speaker," he said, "we have been stung before, we must not be stung again." Another member, who opposed a Bill I sponsored to improve the sanitation of Nassau,† told me that his "old mother lived to over ninety, and *she* never had any sanitation." But on the whole the speeches were better in the Bahamas House of Assembly than in any other colonial legislature I have known. The debates in that House taught me a great deal.

When I returned to Nigeria in 1929, as Deputy Chief Secretary, I was *ex officio* a member of the Legislative Council, and when I acted as Chief Secretary, as I did most of the time, I was the senior member.

* It is a very long time since approval of the election of a Speaker to a British legislature has been refused by the Sovereign or by any of His Majesty's representatives

† See p. 268.

As such it fell to me, in January, 1931, to make a very difficult speech in connection with a resolution moved by an African member expressing regret at the loss of life in the so-called "women's riots" at Aba and other places in the south-eastern provinces of Nigeria.* and calling for the punishment of the civil and military officers who had been censured by the subsequent Commission of Enquiry. The report of this Commission blamed these officials for their handling of a difficult and unprecedented situation, and the Government, I am glad to say, did not accept these findings of the report. The chairman of the Commission was the Chief Justice, and it was no easy matter in one breath to express Government's appreciation of his work and that of his colleagues, and at the same time indicate that the most important part of their report was not accepted. Making it clear that Government supported the first part of the resolution, I moved that the resolution should be amended by the deletion of the second part; my proposed amendment was carried by 35 votes to two, five of the African members voting with the majority.

The debates in the Nigerian Legislative Council, as compared with those in the Bahamas House of Assembly, were dull and uninspiring. Every African unofficial member felt it his duty to make a speech on every motion, whether he had anything to contribute to the debate or not; if he did not speak his constituents would have regarded him as failing in his duty. (This is not peculiar to Nigeria). On the other hand, it was very seldom that an official member, other than the Chief Secretary, the Attorney General, and the Treasurer, ever spoke, and it was a depressing sight to see some twenty highly-paid officials sitting wearily through hours and hours of speeches, thinking of the work piling up in their offices, and trying, not always with success, to keep awake.

I went as Governor to British Honduras in 1934, and there I found a Legislative Council which contained a majority of unofficial members, nominated by the Governor, but the Governor was in possession of "reserve" powers, which means that he was entitled in

* See p. 253.

any matter of importance, or in any matter affecting finance,* to ignore the unofficial vote and count only the votes of the official members. It was not long before I had to use these powers. The colony was bankrupt, and the British Treasury had to make a grant-in-aid to balance the budgets of successive years. Sir Alan Pim had been sent out, early in 1934, to investigate conditions and to make recommendations, and one of his recommendations was that import duties on certain articles should be raised so as to increase the revenue. The unofficial members refused to vote for any increase of duties, on the grounds that the people could not afford any additional taxes. While I sympathised with this argument,† I pointed out that the budget had been passed with a deficit of \$240,000, and that the proposed increases of duties would yield no more than \$60,000; that while I realised that the people of British Honduras were in straitened circumstances, there were people in Great Britain in a far worse condition, and that taxation there was much heavier; and that it would be a great misfortune for British Honduras if the impression were given that the colony wanted to shift the whole of its burden on to the shoulders of the British taxpayer.‡ I added that I had been prepared to compromise to meet the views of the unofficial members on certain items of the proposed duties to which they had referred, but as they refused to co-operate I had no option but to use the powers vested in me, that I had hoped to govern the colony with their co-operation, but that I proposed to govern without it if

* The Governor's "reserve" powers in the matter of finance were given him because of the fact that British Honduras was then "on the dole." The Ordinance (No. 17 of 1932) gave him such powers as were "necessary to secure within scope of any such Bill, clause, amendment, resolution or vote as aforesaid the control of finance of the Colony by His Majesty's Government for the period during which the Colony receives financial assistance from His Majesty's Exchequer." On the subject of such control, see p. 129.

† As a matter of fact I had previously obtained the consent of the Secretary of State to my proposal not to impose all the duties recommended by Sir Alan Pim. Some years had yet to pass before the British Treasury and the House of Commons were able to take a generous view of the necessities of impoverished colonies.

‡ In addition to the grants-in-aid made by the British Treasury to balance the annual budget, large sums were later granted from the Colonial Development Fund, on my recommendation, for the construction of roads and for other purposes. What the colony would have done had these grants not been forthcoming I really do not know. A large proportion of the population was unemployed, and many were near starvation; the work that was made possible by these Colonial Development Fund grants saved the situation. It was not always easy to get approval for these grants, but the Colonial Office nobly supported my persistent appeals.

that were necessary. I then directed the Clerk of the Council to count only the votes of the official members, and the amendment to the Customs tariff was duly passed.

Not long afterwards the constitution was changed* by the introduction of the elective principle, and the Council then consisted of the Governor, as President, five official members, two nominated unofficial members, and six (at first five) unofficial members elected by five constituencies. The Governor retained "reserve" powers under the new constitution, but I never had occasion to use them.

Perhaps I should explain here exactly what these "reserve" (or "paramount," or "overriding") powers are. Whatever they may be called, and however the wording of the Instrument may run which gives these powers, the principle is the same, that in the last resort the Governor, who carries out the general directions of the Secretary of State, who is, in his turn, the representative vis-à-vis the colonies of the British Government and Parliament, should have the necessary power to pass such measures as are deemed essential.† In the early days of Crown Colony government, as I have mentioned above, it was thought necessary to have in each Legislative Council a majority of government officials who would vote as directed by the Governor, but the same object is attained, in large matters if not in details, by giving the Governor "reserve" powers. There is the disadvantage that on a matter of detail the Governor could hardly use his powers, although, if there were an official majority, it could be used to put through even a trivial matter; the result may be that factious opposition on small points may arise, but though this may be irritating it is of little real consequence, and as a rule it is the people of the colony who suffer as a result of such factious opposition. On the other hand there is the positive advantage that the time of senior officials is not wasted by attendance at Council, and that they are not placed in the somewhat ridiculous position, when a division occurs, of mere voting machines.

The constitution of a colony is generally granted and set out in Royal Letters Patent and Orders-in-Council, and although the

* The Constitution was again changed in 1945.

† This is a positive power, and much stronger than the purely negative power of the veto which every Governor possesses.

general form of these Instruments is the same they vary greatly in wording. The Legislative Council Order in Council of the Gold Coast provides that if the Council fail to pass "a Bill or motion within such time and in such form as the Governor may think reasonable and expedient," and the Governor considers it "expedient in the interests of public order, public faith or good government (which expressions shall, without prejudice to their generality, include the responsibility of the Gold Coast as a component part of the British Empire, and all matters pertaining to the creation or abolition of any public office, or to the appointment, salary or other conditions of service of any public officer)," the Governor may in his discretion declare that such Bill or motion shall have effect as though it had been passed. The Governor must report his action in such cases to the Secretary of State, and this action may be revoked.*

In British Honduras, as explained above, the Governor's powers were exercised by a direction to the Clerk of the Council to count only the votes of the official members, and there are other variations in other colonies. But in every colony where there is an unofficial majority in the legislature (save in the colonies mentioned above which retain the "old" form of constitution) the Governor is given such powers as will enable him, in the last resort, to carry through such measures as he, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, may think essential. A little reflection will show that this must be so for such time as the British government is ultimately responsible for the "Crown Colonies." A mere veto on legislation is not enough; that is possessed by the Governor of the Bahamas, but experience has shown that this is insufficient and cannot ensure the passage of social and other legislation which modern circumstances demand. So whether they are termed "reserve powers," or "paramount powers," or "overriding powers," these powers make it possible for the Governor to carry out the policy of the British government against the wishes of the local legislature.

Some of the elected members of the British Honduras Legislative Council were highly intelligent and reasonable men, anxious to do

* Gold Coast Colony and Ashanti (Legislative Council) Order in Council, 1946.

their best for the colony. Others, unfortunately, were not of this type, and were chiefly concerned in playing to the gallery by indiscriminate abuse of the government and the white officials. One of these elected members who was quite unable to understand a matter in spite of the most patient explanation, was twice returned to the Council by the electors although most of them fully realised his lack of ability. This was made up for, in their view, by his willingness to be offensive to the white section. As Lord Durham wrote more than a hundred years ago* "... the colonial demagogue bids high for popularity without the fear of future exposure. Hopelessly excluded from power, he exercises the wildest opinions, and appeals to the most mischievous passions of the people, without any apprehension of having his sincerity or prudence hereafter tested . . . and thus the prominent places in the ranks of opposition are occupied for the most part by men of strong passions, and merely declamatory powers, who think but little of reforming the abuses which serve them as topics for exciting discontent."

On one occasion I had to call on a member to withdraw a statement he had made. Another member had asked one of the official members whether he had ever visited a certain station ; the official member replied in the affirmative, and the questioner said no more. But a third member then joined issue and stated that the official member had not visited the station in question, and that he was not telling the truth. The Council was in Committee at the time, and when the member would not withdraw his remark I deferred action until Council was again in session, which gave the erring member an opportunity to collect his supporters, who packed the gallery of the Chamber. When I again formally called on the member to withdraw his remark his supporters in the gallery shouted "No," and I then had all "strangers" cleared from the Chamber. With the rabble no longer there to give him moral support, the member, after some hesitation, and just as I was about to "name" him, withdrew his remark. The police were a little apprehensive that there would be trouble when I left the Council Chamber, as the rabble ejected from the Chamber were waiting outside in a somewhat excited state.

* Report and despatches of the Earl of Durham, Her Majesty's High Commissioner and Governor-General of British North America, 1839.

As I left, the crowd started to boo, but when I laughed at them (it was a comic spectacle) they joined in the laugh and all was well ; the great virtue of the African and his West Indian cousin is a sense of humour.

Towards the end of 1941 I was appointed to the Gold Coast as Governor, but before I had been there very long I went to Nigeria to administer the Government in the absence of Sir Bernard Bourdillon. Soon after my arrival I had to preside over the budget session of the Legislative Council. One of the Bills before the Council was an amendment to the income tax law, recommended by the substantive Governor and approved by the Secretary of State. Although I did not agree with the terms of the Bill, I was, in my acting capacity, in great difficulty, especially as the Bill was violently opposed by the unofficial members and disliked by many of the officials.* I decided, therefore, to force the Bill through the Council, by the use of the official majority, but not to give my assent which was necessary before it could become law ; this did not preclude Sir Bernard Bourdillon from assenting to the Bill if he wished to after he had resumed the government. I am glad to say, however, that both he and the Secretary of State, on reconsideration, agreed with my view and the Bill was never assented to.

When I returned to the Gold Coast I found that a storm had arisen over the action of the acting Governor, who had approved the payment of "separation allowances" to certain European officials without calling a full meeting of the Finance Committee as he had been asked to do. The allowances were disliked as no corresponding benefits had been given to the African staff, and the matter had become a racial one, but more play was made with the alleged "unconstitutional" conduct of the acting Governor.† It was unfortunate that my first meeting with the Gold Coast Legislative Council should have been clouded by this controversy, but at least it gave me the opportunity of listening to one of the finest speeches I have ever heard in a colonial legislature. The speaker was Sir

* I have never known, in any colonial legislature, the official members indicate their hostility to a government measure so plainly as they did on this occasion—not in words but by their general behaviour.

† As a matter of fact the acting Governor was quite innocent of any constitutional impropriety.

Ofori Atta, K.B.E., the paramount chief of Akim Abuakwa, a man of outstanding ability and a born orator.

The Gold Coast Council consisted then of the Governor, as President, fifteen official members, and fourteen unofficials. Of the unofficials, five were Europeans, including representatives of the mercantile and mining interests; three were Africans elected by ballot to represent the towns of Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi; and six were Chiefs, elected by the Provincial Councils of Chiefs. The members were courteous and helpful in Council, and there was little unreasonable opposition to Government measures. For years the Council had had as its senior unofficial member Sir Ofori Atta, whose example and leadership were of great value; his death in 1943 was a great loss to the Council and to the Gold Coast.*

There was one most unfortunate incident which brought discredit on the Council. At a time when popular feeling was running very high against the Association of West African Merchants the member for Accra approached one of the European members of Council, who happened to be the Chairman of the Association, and offered to refrain from making a speech in Council attacking the Association if he were given £25,000. The European member in question, at the next meeting of the Council, asked leave to make a statement, and, when this was granted, informed the Council of the offer that had been made to him. I asked the member for Accra whether he had anything to say in reply to this serious allegation; he rose to his feet, hesitated for some moments, and then said, "I think what the Honourable Member has said is correct."† Later, he tried to explain away the matter, but no doubt was left in my mind, or in the minds of others present, that he had admitted the allegation. I at once appointed a Select Committee to enquire into the matter, and this Committee later reported‡ that the evidence they had taken established the truth of the allegation, and that the conduct of the member for Accra was derogatory to the dignity of the Legislative Council and inconsistent with the standards which the Council is

* His funeral "custom," some six months after his death, led to one of the greatest scandals in modern Gold Coast history; see pages 66 and 219.

† Gold Coast *Legislative Council Debates*, Session 1944, Issue No. 1, p. 99.

‡ Sessional Paper No. 9 of 1944.

entitled to expect from its members ; the report of the Committee was adopted without opposition.*

In the meantime, however, it had been decided to prosecute the member for Accra, who thereupon became a "martyr" and a popular hero. Press and public alike took an almost hysterical interest in the proceedings, the Court was crowded every day during the long trial and the local papers reported each detail of the trial to the exclusion of other news, including news of the war in Europe and the campaign in Burma where Gold Coast troops were fighting ; it was a sorry business. The trial gave the opportunity to defending counsel and witnesses to attack the Association of West African Merchants and a visitor to the Court might have been excused for thinking that the Association and not the member for Accra was on trial ; but this red herring was of no effect and the accused was convicted, and sentenced to one day's imprisonment and a fine of £200.† I believe that the vast majority of the people of Accra knew in their hearts that he was guilty, although their misguided sense of racial loyalty (or their lack of moral courage) made them pretend otherwise.

The Legislative Council of the Gold Coast at this time represented only the Colony. There were no members representing Ashanti or the Protectorate of the Northern Territories, and legislation for these areas was enacted by the Governor alone (as is still the case for the Northern Territories). In the past the Ashantis had held themselves aloof from the people of the Colony, whom they had fought (and generally defeated) several times during the last century. As lately as October, 1942, the Ashanti Confederacy Council passed a resolution to the effect that it was undesirable to ask for representation on the Legislative Council, on the grounds that the Council had a majority of official members. I doubt whether this was the real reason. In any case, a little later, in connection with the payment of certain money in respect of the Kumasi lands, the Ashantis discovered that no money could be paid from the public treasury without the approval of the (Colony) Legislative Council ; this had always been so although the Ashantis had never realised it. They

* On the 3rd October, 1944. See Minutes of Legislative Council.

† The conviction was upheld by the West African Court of Appeal and a further appeal to the Privy Council was unsuccessful. The accused, who was a barrister, was disbarred in consequence of his conviction.

were now seized with the desire to have a share in the disposal of public funds and were ripe for any suggestion that they should have members in the Legislative Council.

Accordingly, when the Secretary of State for the Colonies* visited the Gold Coast in 1943 he was presented with a memorandum, signed by Colony and Ashanti chiefs and the Municipal Members of Legislative Council, praying for a change in the Constitution. I have some reason to believe that the Ashanti chiefs were forced to sign this memorandum very hurriedly, and that they had little opportunity to read and understand it. I know that the implication of at least one of the requests in the memorandum was not appreciated by them, but nevertheless they signed the document and there is no doubt that they did want to have representatives in the Legislative Council.

The memorandum contained, among other things, certain requests which obviously could not be granted. They asked for an unofficial majority in the Legislative Council without any provision of "reserve" powers for the Governor; for an elected majority in the Executive Council; and for a high proportion of members to represent the coast towns and Kumasi. The actual proposals were that there should be ten municipal members (three each for Accra and Kumasi, and two each for Cape Coast and Sekondi) with fourteen provincial members for the Colony and three to represent Ashanti. In other words, the town of Kumasi, with a population of 36,000 (at census of 1931) was to have three members while the same number of members were to represent the 540,000 Ashantis who lived outside Kumasi. Cape Coast, with a population of 18,000, was to have two members; the population of the Colony which totalled over one and a half millions, was to have fourteen provincial members. The idea behind these suggestions was, of course, to give the so-called intelligentsia (horrid word), who lived in the towns, an influence in the legislature which could not be justified by their numbers, nor, I am afraid, by their public spirit.

But perhaps the most remarkable request was for the creation of the post of Minister for Home Affairs, who was to be elected by the elected members of the Legislative Council and removable by their

* Colonel the Right Honourable Oliver Stanley, M.C., M.P.

vote. Over his actions, apparently, the Governor was to have no control, and he was to be responsible for all "native affairs" in the country. It would have been interesting to see how this Minister, who would certainly have been a native of the Colony, would have been accepted in Ashanti. Of one thing I am certain, that as soon as the Minister took definite action in any matter of importance he would have been removed from office with the same haste as the Chiefs of the Colony are "de-stooled."*

The Secretary of State decided that he was unable to agree to the grant of a constitution in the form requested, but authorised me to discuss the matter with the signatories of the memorandum with a view to their putting up alternative proposals which he might be more disposed to meet. I accordingly invited the Joint Provincial Council of Chiefs for the Colony, and the Ashanti Confederacy Council, to nominate delegates to discuss the matter with me at Government House, and I also invited the Municipal Members of Legislative Council. I explained to the delegates the reasons why certain of their requests could not be granted, and then, after they had asked me to do so, I outlined the sort of constitution which I would be prepared to recommend to the Secretary of State ; three weeks later, on the 17th August, 1944, I again met the delegates who had, in the meantime, consulted their principals. They made various suggestions, with most of which I was able to agree, and finally I undertook to transmit their amended requests to the Secretary of State. The matter was dealt with so quickly in the Colonial Office that I was able to announce, on the 4th October, that the Secretary of State had agreed to most of the requests and that the necessary Instruments would be drawn up as soon as possible ; one of the Chiefs, and the Municipal Member for Cape Coast, expressed their thanks in Council for the promised grant of a new constitution, and with one exception the local papers also expressed their satisfaction.

Under the new constitution the Legislative Council consists of a President, who, in the absence of any other appointment, is the

* It was fairly generally believed that the signatories to the Memorandum were not unanimously in favour of this proposal, which emanated from the brain of a certain politician who hoped that he would himself be elected Minister for Home Affairs.

Governor ; six official members, namely the Colonial Secretary ; the three Chief Commissioners (of the Colony, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories), the Attorney General, and the Financial Secretary ; six unofficial members nominated by the Governor ; and eighteen elected unofficial members. This gives the elected members a clear majority over the official and nominated members combined (with "reserve" powers to the Governor). The elected members include nine elected by the Joint Provincial Council of the Colony ; four elected by the Ashanti Confederacy Council ; and five elected by ballot for four of the largest towns, two for Accra and one each for Cape Coast, Sekondi-Takoradi,* and Kumasi.

The Governor may appoint Extraordinary Members for any special occasion, but such members would not be allowed to vote. Nor has the President any vote, either original or casting ; if there is an equality of votes on any motion that motion is treated as lost, as it has not been carried. There is a good reason for giving no vote to the President. At the present time the Governor is President, but it is, for many reasons, undesirable that he should preside over Legislative Council, especially now that he possesses "reserve" powers. The Governor, sitting as President of the Council, cannot help joining, even if to a limited extent, in the hurly-burly of debate, and (less in the Gold Coast than in any other Colony I have known) by so doing lays himself open to attack, which is bad for the prestige of the King's Representative. Again, it would be far better that he should exercise his "reserve" powers in the quiet of his office, after careful thought, than in the Council on the spur of the moment, especially when passions are running high, as they almost certainly would be in any case where the use of the Governor's powers could be contemplated ; it is true that the Governor can defer a decision in the matter, but that may be taken as implying some doubt in his own mind, and would encourage the opposition to use more violent arguments to influence what they would think to be his wavering intention. For these and other reasons I think it would be far better for someone other than the Governor to be President of the Legislative Council. I realise that in many colonies it is difficult to find any independent person of sufficient standing for this position,

* These two towns now form a single municipality.

and in these circumstances I consider that the Chief Justice should be appointed. This suggestion will, I know, be objected to on the ground that the Chief Justice should be kept out of politics but I fail to see how he could be held to be taking any part in politics if he sits, as an umpire, to control the debates of Council and to see that the Standing Orders of the Council are complied with. As President he would not have even a casting vote, and he would express no opinions except on points of order. He would be certainly a more impartial umpire than the Governor could possibly be, although I hope that no Governor would knowingly be partial in his rulings. But it must be remembered (as was pointed out by Sir Ronald Storrs in his book *Orientations*) that the Governor is the King's Representative and as such should be above politics ; he is, as President of the Council, in the position of the Speaker of the House of Commons, and as such should be impartial in his judgments ; but he is also, as head of the government, in the position of the Prime Minister and, as such, most definitely biased in his support of government measures. It is not always easy for a Governor to keep these three functions separated in his mind.

It will be observed that the Chief Commissioners of Ashanti and the Northern Territories have been added to the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast ; in the case of the former, this is the logical result of having unofficial members for Ashanti, and in the case of the latter this is the first step towards representation of the Northern Territories in the Council and provides someone in the Council who can speak for the people of those Territories who are not yet sufficiently advanced to elect their own representatives.* Even with the addition of these two officers the official membership of the Legislative Council has been reduced from fifteen to six, to the great benefit of the public service. Of the six unofficial members nominated by me in 1946, three are Europeans and three are Africans.

Of the elected members, five are chosen by ballot to represent the

* In a speech to the Northern Territories Chiefs at Tamale, on the 27th January, 1945, I said : "I look forward to the time when the Chief Commissioner will be accompanied to Accra by representatives of the Northern Territories selected by the Chiefs to sit in the Legislative Council and to represent their people, but before this can happen it is necessary that the Chiefs of the Northern Territories should form a Joint Council to settle among themselves those problems which are common to all, and to select from among yourselves representatives for the common legislature."

four most important towns ; of these towns all except Kumasi had long enjoyed the privilege of electing their representatives, and this privilege could not have been taken from them, nor could the principle of direct election by ballot have easily been altered. But in the case of the other elected members it has been possible to secure the principle of indirect election,* by electoral colleges, which reduces the probability of the Council being filled by professional politicians of the type who so often, in the colonies, get elected to the legislature. It is true that the Joint Provincial Council of Chiefs in the Colony may select non-Chiefs as Provincial Members,† or that they may select unworthy representatives of their own order, but the Chiefs are men of standing in the community, with a sense of responsibility to their people, by whom they have been chosen, and they can, I think, be counted on to exercise their powers of selection with care and discretion. In Ashanti, where the Chiefs are less fluent in English and less experienced in political matters, it is inevitable that fewer Chiefs should be elected.‡

I feel that the principle of indirect election is a good one, and that it offers the best opportunity for the selection of good representatives for colonial legislatures. The Gold Coast Colony has been fortunate in having English-speaking Chiefs, and the existing Joint Provincial Council (like the Ashanti Confederacy Council) provided a ready-made electoral college, understood by the people.

I am not sure whether it will be possible to adopt in other colonies the principle of indirect election, but I am quite certain that where it is possible it would be an improvement on the ballot box system, which has not been a great success in the colonies. Until complete responsible government is attained the members of colonial legislatures must suffer, whether they realise it or not, from the effects of a lack of potential responsibility. Lord Durham's views, quoted above, are as true today as when they were written last century.

* Which already existed in the Gold Coast, where the Provincial Councils (not the Joint Provincial Council) elected members to the Legislative Council.

† They have been urged to do so by the local Press, which is largely under the control of the politically-minded "intelligentsia"; I hope, for the sake of the Gold Coast, that this advice will not be followed too closely. In 1946 the Joint Provincial Council elected seven Chiefs, one clergyman and one lawyer; the clergyman was an excellent choice.

‡ Only one was elected in 1946.

Nothing but the fear of having to deliver the goods will restrain the demagogue, and the demagogue is more likely to be elected through the medium of the ballot box than by an electoral college which is not itself elected by ballot. The ranting demagogue does his constituents no good, except in so far as he soothes their inferiority complex by reckless abuse of the government and government officials ; he does them actual harm, as he antagonises those who would otherwise be sympathetic and brings discredit on those who elected him. The quiet and courteous member can secure a great deal for his people, even against an official majority in the Legislative Council, but he seldom gets credit for his quiet work ; it is necessary to shout to make himself heard by the general public. Apart from anything else, the decent type of man is seldom prepared to face the unpleasantness of opposing the demagogue in an election. In a small community, where everyone is well known, personalities are freely used not only at the expense of the candidates themselves but also of their families ; the type of demagogue of whom I am thinking is quite unscrupulous in the things he will say, or encourage his supporters to say, about his opponent, knowing, if the opponent is a decent type of man, that he is safe from retaliation. In British Honduras I was told by one man, who had been asked by many voters to stand for election, that he could not expose his wife and family to the unpleasantness that would follow his candidature,* and so a possible member of Council who would have been a credit to his colony and done a great deal for it, stood aside, and his place was taken by another who was his opposite in all respects.

It may be said that such an attitude shows a lack of moral courage on the part of the "decent" section of the community, and so it does, but consideration must be given to local circumstances. I was much surprised on one occasion when a member of the Legislative Council voted against a government measure with which he had previously assured me, in conversation in my office, he was in entire agreement. When the opportunity arose later I asked the member why he had voted against a measure with which he agreed ; he replied that it would have made him very unpopular if he had voted for it and he knew that I could get it passed without his vote. Seeing my look

* I have been told practically the same thing by an African in the Gold Coast.

of surprise he reminded me that I was a bird of passage and that if I did something unpopular it did not greatly matter as I would not be staying long in the colony, but that he (and his family) would be there permanently, and would continue indefinitely to suffer the results of unpopularity.

This is a point worth remembering even if one cannot agree with the principle involved. It also helps to confirm a view I have long held, that many of the people in the colonies who join in the general demand for political advance would be very sorry indeed if this demand were met on too generous a scale. The official majority in the Legislative Council, or the "reserve" powers of the Governor, may be condemned in the press or in public speeches, but a large number of those who join in the condemnation would be sorry to lose those safeguards. There is, of course, an influential minority which seeks power and can only attain it if all these restrictions were removed and if the government depended entirely on ballot box results. The minority can always whip up opposition to government measures by speeches at public meetings and through the press which they control. At many of these public meetings, where resolutions are unanimously passed, it is doubtful whether half of the people present understand the point at issue, or care very much about it anyway. There is little mutual interest (or even understanding) between the "intelligentsia" and the mass of the people. There is indeed little in common, except colour, as between the educated and comparatively wealthy member of the community, and the farmer or labourer who earns little money, has practically no education, and is quite contented if only he is left to his own devices. The opposition to the introduction of income tax in the Gold Coast is a typical example of the way in which the richer members of the African community whipped up, in their own interests, the feeling of the poorer people against a tax which could not possibly have affected them and would in fact provide money to improve their position. In 1932 the Gold Coast government announced its intention of introducing a Bill to impose an income tax, but, as the result of opposition stimulated by the educated section of the community, the government withdrew the Bill. In 1943 an income tax ordinance was passed in Legislative Council, after an attempt was made by the

Municipal Members of Council to have it postponed, and in spite of the usual press agitation against it and the resolutions of mass meetings addressed by educated men. Before the Bill was passed I was warned by responsible persons of the danger of riotous demonstrations against it which did not in fact materialise when it became evident that government was determined that the Bill should go through. Some play was made with the theory that there should be no taxation without representation, and that until the Gold Coast received a new constitution, with an unofficial majority, income tax should not be introduced; the fact was blithely ignored that taxation had existed for a very long time—indirect taxation which affected the poorer man in much higher proportion than his richer brother.

Perhaps the most amusing argument was advanced by the Municipal Member for Cape Coast, who urged postponement of the Bill on the ground that "there has not yet been given sufficient time to consider the Bill in all its bearings, especially seeing that the great majority of the people is illiterate—though by no means unenlightened or inarticulate—and the number of forms that will have to be filled if this Bill becomes law will lead to a great deal of trouble and confusion."* I do not suppose that a single one of these illiterate people would have become liable to pay income tax, and the educated section who tried to frighten them with this bogey knew well, or should have known, that this was so. This is the sort of thing which shakes one's faith in the political honesty of the type of man elected, in a country largely illiterate, by means of the ballot, and makes it necessary in the interests of the people themselves that control of the legislature, in one form or another, should be retained for the present.†

Let us consider what the introduction of income tax meant to the people of the Gold Coast. The receipts from income tax in the financial year 1946-47 was £1,818,000, or about one-quarter of the total revenue of the colony. Of this amount it is certain that not less than 95 per cent. is payable by non-African companies and individuals and it is thought that Africans themselves pay less than

* Gold Coast Legislative Council Debates, Session 1943, No. 2, p. 40.

† "Theorists often forget that self-government does not necessarily mean democracy." Mr. L. D. Gammans in *The Spectator* of 7th February, 1947.

2 per cent. of the total. The allowances under the law are so generous that most Africans are certain to be exempt. No bachelor with an income of £150 per annum or less is liable to tax, and for a married man the figure is £350 per annum with further exemptions in respect of children. Apart from this, the rates of tax are extremely low. On the first £200 of taxable income the rate is only 3d. in the pound. Thus a married man with an income of £550 per annum would pay no more than £2 10s. od. per annum as income tax ; if his income amounted to £750 per annum he would pay £7 10s. od. a year. There are few Africans in the Gold Coast with an income of £550 per annum, and such as there are would probably be members of the professional classes, or comparatively highly-paid government officials. So the poorer class of African has suffered nothing by the imposition of income tax : on the contrary, he has benefited, as it has been possible, since the introduction of income tax, to remove certain import duties on articles consumed by the poorer classes. It is distressing to think what the opposition to income tax has cost the Gold Coast since it was first proposed in 1932. In the twelve years between 1932 and 1944, when income tax was first collected, probably not less than £12,000,000, which could have been used to improve the social conditions of the people, has been lost for ever to the country, through the opposition organised and led by "popular" politicians.* The government is not free from blame for yielding to their clamour.

It must not be thought, from what I have said above, that I am opposed to popular representation in the colonial legislatures. On the contrary, I think such representation is essential if we are to fulfil our promises, frequently given, of ultimate self-government. But I do not think that the ballot box is the only way, or the best way, of obtaining suitable members for the legislature. The Gold Coast has, I hope, found the solution in the indirect election of a majority of the members, but there were special circumstances which facilitated this ; in other colonies other solutions may have to be found.

* In Lord Durham's Report on Canada he says : "If the Lower Canadians had been subjected or rather had been taught to subject themselves to a much greater amount of taxation, they would probably at this time have been a much wealthier, a much better governed, a much more civilized, and a much more contented people." See *The Durham Report*, by Sir R. Coupland, p. 78.

There is no need for slavish imitation of British methods of election in all colonies and, indeed, there is no reason for thinking that the Westminster model must necessarily be the best for a colonial legislature, without any adaptation to local circumstances. Nor should governments hesitate, out of undue respect for "democracy" to use such powers as they possess (whether by an official majority in Council or through the Governor's "reserve" powers), to put through measures for the benefit of the public even in opposition to their "representatives." I do not suggest that in minor matters such powers should be used ; not only would this be bad tactics but it would give the unofficial members no opportunity to learn from their own mistakes. But where a major matter of policy, or a matter of principle, is at issue, there is every reason for firm action by those who are really responsible for the welfare of the community ; such action will be styled high-handed and undemocratic but this is better than surrender to factious opposition, stirred up, only too often, in the interests of a few.

I have been asked why the members of a colonial Legislative Council are styled "The Honourable," a distinction which members of the House of Commons in Great Britain do not possess. I believe the reason to be that the style was used for members of the Legislative Council under the "old" colonial constitutions, when this Council was the "Upper House" in a two-Chamber legislature. When the second Chamber was abolished under the Crown Colony constitutions the survivor was called the Legislative Council and its members continued to be styled "The Honourable." There seems to be no adequate reason for retaining this distinction in the case of members of a single-Chamber legislature, and in the Bahamas, for instance, the members of the House of Assembly do not have this style. It has been suggested to me that a desire for this distinction, which is not always dropped as it should be when members leave the colony, is responsible for some persons seeking election or nomination to Legislative Councils.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

IN this chapter I am going to refer to the Colonial Civil Service and some general questions of administration. The first statement to be made, however, about the Colonial Civil Service, if one is to satisfy the pedants, is that there is no such thing. Each colony pays, and (under the general supervision of the Secretary of State) controls its own Civil Service, and different conditions of service exist in most colonies. Then also, apart from these geographical divisions, the staff of each colony is divided up between a number of departments and "Services." In this book, however, I use the term "Colonial Civil Service" in the sense in which it is generally understood, that is, as including all salaried officials employed and paid by the governments of the different colonies, protectorates, and trusteeship territories.

An attempt at unification has been made by the creation of "Unified Services," such as the Colonial Administrative Service, the Colonial Agricultural Service, and others,* to which appointments are made by the Secretary of State. The qualifications required for members of these Unified Services include, as a rule, a university degree or equivalent professional status. The salary, leave privileges, and such important matters as whether or not free quarters are provided, vary between colonies or groups of colonies. Members of a Unified Service are liable to be transferred from one colony to another at the discretion of the Secretary of State, but in practice they are very seldom moved except on promotion.

An officer selected in England by the Secretary of State for, let us say, the Colonial Medical Service, proceeds to the colony to which he has been assigned and there becomes a member of the Medical Department of that colony; a medical man selected locally, probably a native of the colony, is not necessarily a member of the Colonial Medical Service, even though his qualifications may be as high,

* The other Colonial Services are the Audit, Chemical, Customs, Education, Forest, Geological Survey, Legal, Medical, Mines, Police, Postal, Survey, and Veterinary.

and this fact has caused a great deal of feeling, even though, in some cases, there is no difference in pay. While I am a believer in the differentiation of pay between the local officer and his "expatriated" colleague,* I have never seen any adequate justification for the exclusion of local officers from Unified Services if they are qualified; a system which provokes unnecessary feeling must be a bad one. I will suggest later how the objects sought in the unification of Services could be attained without arousing feeling (which too often is racial feeling.)†

An important point with regard to the Colonial Service is that although certain minimum qualifications are as a rule required, there is no competitive examination, and officers are selected in the United Kingdom (and in a few cases in the Dominions) not only on their academic records, but also on reports received regarding their general character and as the result of personal interviews. In some colonies local candidates for official posts are appointed as the result of a competitive examination, but more often are selected, as in England, as the result of reports received and personal interviews.

There have been demands, especially in some colonies, for a system of competitive entry to the Civil Service, rather than selection, chiefly because of the suspicion, entirely unfounded in my belief, that the selectors are prejudiced. I am sure that to decide on the appointment of men entirely on their ability to pass examinations would result in the lowering of the general standard of the Service in efficiency and character.‡ Basing my conviction on a long experience in several colonies, I feel certain that a strong character and sound common sense are far more valuable assets to a colonial official (and the Colonial Service) than the most brilliant academic distinctions. Those whom Kipling has called the "brittle intellectuals" too frequently "crack beneath a strain," such strains as the loneliness of a "bush" station, the irritations of heat and insects, the perversity of

* See p. 296.

† See p. 297.

‡ While I am entirely in favour of requiring a university degree as a qualification for admission to certain posts, for example posts in the Administrative Service, I cannot help reflecting that the rigid application of this rule in the past would have excluded several Governors from the Service, such as Lord Lugard, Sir Donald Cameron, Sir Hugh Clifford, and, to come down to a lower level, myself. As a matter of fact, the rule is not rigid today, but in practice a candidate without a degree would have in ordinary times very little chance of appointment.

the local people who *will* not realise what is the best for them, and the temptations of drink and women. I agree that the increasing complexity of government functions requires well-trained and well-educated men to handle the problems that arise, but different qualifications are needed for different kinds of work. I do not believe that common sense and a strong character are in themselves sufficient qualification for a senior headquarters post, and a man who is a good "Bush D.C." is not necessarily competent in a Secretariat post or in a "specialist" appointment. But equally I believe that an officer of high intellectual and academic qualifications might quite easily be a failure in "the bush."

As I have indicated above, a great deal of feeling has been aroused by the (unnecessary) discrimination in appointments to the Unified Services between men selected in the United Kingdom and those selected in the colonies ; most of the latter are coloured and the discrimination is attributed, wrongly, to colour prejudice alone. Feeling has also been aroused by the (necessary) discrimination as between the two classes of officers in the matter of pay and other conditions of service.

In the past, while in the West Indies and some other colonies no distinction has been made as regards pay between the local and the "imported" officials holding the same posts, the position in the African colonies has been very different. Here, although there have been slight variations, the general practice was to fix the salary of the African holder of an office at three-quarters* of the salary paid to his European colleague, and to provide free quarters for the European officer only. The reason for this distinction was never clearly explained and the unsatisfied demand by the African that he should receive equal pay for the same work has caused a perennial grievance, not only among African officers who consider themselves underpaid, but also among Africans generally who regard the discrimination as due to colour prejudice and an implication of inferiority.

All this time, while feeling on the subject was steadily growing, no serious attempt was made to point out to the African that while there was undoubtedly discrimination, this discrimination was not as between European and African, but between the European in the

* In Nigeria. In the Gold Coast the African official received more.

colonies and the European in his own country. Furthermore, it was not a case of the African receiving less pay than the European for the same work, but of the European receiving more pay than the African (and his European brother at home) because he was required to leave his own country and work in a different land, in a different and generally hostile climate, and often in such conditions that he could not have his family with him.

A clear comparison can be drawn between the emoluments of European colonial officials and the officials of the Colonial Office in London. My emoluments as Governor of the Gold Coast, for instance, were £6,000 a year free of income tax, and free quarters, while the Secretary of State for the Colonies receives £5,000 a year, less income tax ; no one would suggest that the duties and responsibilities of the Governor of a single colony are equal to those of the Secretary of State who is answerable for the whole of the colonial empire, and to whom the Governor of each colony is in fact responsible. Some Heads of Departments in the Gold Coast draw higher salaries than Assistant Under Secretaries of State in the Colonial Office ; the comparative status of Assistant Under Secretaries is shown by the fact that serving Governors were appointed to these posts. Cadets appointed to the Gold Coast Administrative Service start with a considerably higher salary than Assistant Principals in Downing Street, although their educational and other qualifications are no better, yet I do not believe that many Assistant Principals would accept an appointment in a tropical colony.

The discrimination, therefore, is not based on race but on domicile, and the Gold Coast African is, in this matter, in precisely the same position as the Colonial Office official, and has as little cause for grievance. The misunderstanding has been due, in my opinion, to the failure to make quite clear the principle of expatriation. This is owing to the fact that for a long time there were no Africans fitted to perform the duties of senior posts, and that in consequence these posts were invariably filled by European officers, the African staff being confined to the clerical and other lower grades. As Africans became better educated and were appointed to the so-called "European" posts, the mistake was made of considering the salary of the post to be the salary drawn by the European officer, and

calculating the African's salary by making a proportionate reduction. This is exactly the opposite to the method that should have been adopted.

In my opinion the basic salary of a post should be the salary reasonably sufficient for a local holder and any person appointed to this post from another country should draw this basic salary plus an addition in the form of "expatriation pay" to compensate him for the disadvantages attendant on residence abroad, disadvantages not shared by his locally-appointed colleague. This is the proposal I made some years ago in respect of the West African colonies, as I considered it urgently necessary to clear up existing misunderstandings by a clear explanation of the reasons for expatriation pay. The principle involved has now been accepted for West Africa and for the Colonial Service as a whole, and is set out in an official paper* issued by the Colonial Office.

If the expatriation principle is fully applied, so that an officer transferred from one colony to another, as well as the man appointed from the United Kingdom, receives expatriation pay, there could be no justification for the suggestion that the principle involves racial discrimination. It would then be possible to establish a clear distinction between the local Service, composed of men appointed and serving in their own country, and what might be styled the "Imperial Colonial Service," which would include all those selected in Great Britain or one of the Dominions *and* those who have been transferred, invariably on promotion, from one colony to another.

* Colonial No. 197 (1946). The relevant passages are :

(i) The salaries of all posts in the public service of a Colony should be determined according to the nature of the work and the relative responsibilities irrespective of the race or domicile of the individuals occupying the posts.

(ii) The salaries should be fixed at rates applicable to locally recruited staff, even though there may for the time being be grades in which few or no locally recruited officers are in fact serving.

(iii) In fixing these basic salaries regard should be paid to the relevant local circumstances, such as the ruling income levels in those classes of the community from which the public service is or will be recruited.

(iv) Where the salaries so fixed are insufficient to attract and retain officers from overseas, expatriation pay should be provided for such officers. In determining the rates of expatriation pay it will be relevant to consider such factors as the additional expenses to which an officer may be put by reason of the fact that he is serving away from his own home, especially when his service is in a non-temperate climate ; the remuneration and amenities available in alternative careers in the officer's home country ; and the general standard of remuneration and conditions in the Colonial Service.

Of the advantage of such transfers there can be no question. The officer who remains in one colony all his life is bound to be narrow in his outlook, and to suffer from the effects of a lack of experience, which is insufficient to compensate for his greater local knowledge. As time goes on and he becomes more senior, it is often found that he is unfitted for promotion to the highest posts in his own colony, and it is then generally too late to transfer him to another. I have known several cases, especially in the West Indies, of excellent officers who would have gone far if they had been prepared when they were younger to accept transfer ; as it was, their lack of a wider experience had counted against them for promotion and they had remained for long and weary years in comparatively subordinate positions.

Not only in his own interests, but in the interests of the colony, it is desirable that an officer should not remain indefinitely in one place, where local connections, by relationship, marriage, or private interests, may affect his impartiality or give the appearance of doing so. It is extremely difficult in a small colony for a local official to resist all the influences brought to bear on him, deliberately or involuntarily, by those who have known him all his life, and still more difficult for him to avoid the suspicion of being affected by such influences.* More than once in West Africa, Africans themselves have expressed to me their doubts as to the integrity of fellow Africans holding official (and even judicial) appointments, and suggested that family or tribal influences were affecting their decisions.†

It is almost inevitable that the locally appointed officer should be dissatisfied with his basic salary (so few people believe that they are

* This fact was appreciated in the days of the Roman Empire, for Gibbon tells us : "As it was reasonably apprehended that the integrity of the judge might be biassed, if his interest was concerned, or his affections were engaged, the strictest regulations were established to exclude any person, without the special dispensation of the emperor, from the government of the province where he was born ; and to prohibit the governor or his son from contracting marriage with a native or an inhabitant" *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. II, p. 311.

† I have no doubt that in some cases these suspicions were justified, but it is one of the most unfortunate facts of African public life that Africans think and say such unpleasant things of other Africans. On more than one occasion I have publicly stated that I have never heard from Europeans anything so unpleasant about Africans as I have heard from Africans themselves ; the Africans do not question the accuracy of this statement.

sufficiently remunerated for their work) and that, realising that his "imported" colleague is receiving additional expatriation pay, he should press for similar consideration, but he really has no case, and I believe that public opinion will come to recognise this fact. It may, however, take time, as old grievances die hard. An interesting point has been made by African holders of senior posts in the Gold Coast. They maintain that they should receive the same pay as Europeans, on the ground that it costs them as much to send their children to school in England as it costs the European officer, and that, in accordance with native custom they are morally bound (and are forced by public opinion) to support not only their immediate families, but also distant relatives and hangers-on who are entitled to assistance from the successful member of the family.* I agree that the senior African officer is justified in trying to provide a good education for his children, although it is to be hoped that educational facilities in the colonies will be so improved that satisfactory schooling could be obtained without the necessity of sending the children overseas. But on the other point it appears to me that the African is trying to have it both ways, to be treated as a European in the matter of pay and yet comply with native customs based on an entirely different economy.

There is this to be considered. If the African official is to receive a salary based on that which is necessary for the expatriated European there will (apart from the additional cost to the colony) grow up a specially privileged official class, drawing emoluments far and away in excess of the normal income of the people of the country. And this privileged class will remain after the last European official has left the colony and all posts are filled by Africans. Already there is a great disparity between the salaries drawn by African officials in "European" posts, and even in clerical posts, and the income of the great mass of the population. The competition for *any* post in the Government service is sufficient proof of this.

Before I leave the question of salaries there is one point to which I must refer. Twice in my official lifetime there has come a

* It is quite usual for an African family to decide to invest money in the education of the "bright boy" of the family, and to expect from him later dividends on their investment, both in cash and in those favours which the African considers that anyone in a good position would naturally give to friends or relatives.

disastrous trade slump which has affected the revenues of the colonies and on each occasion the decision has been taken that a levy on official salaries must be made as a measure of economy. Why in such circumstances the Public Service should be the first to suffer I cannot understand. Civil Servants are never overpaid and when times are prosperous and other classes of persons are benefiting from a boom there is never any suggestion that Civil Service salaries should be increased. (I could have improved my own financial position considerably if I had accepted the offer made to me of a non-government post in Nigeria during the boom which followed the war of 1914-18.) I consider the policy of a levy on officials' salaries in times of depression as a most unfair breach of faith with public servants.

The division of the Colonial Service into different "Services," and, in the various colonies, into separate departments, is a pregnant cause of jealousy and friction. In recent years the pay of officers in different departments has been made more nearly equal than it was, and this has removed a certain amount of justified resentment, but inter-departmental jealousy still remains, and friction is not unknown. I think this could be reduced, to the greater efficiency of the Public Service, if senior men of the technical departments were given more opportunities of transfer to the higher administrative posts. In theory this could be done now, but it is unusual,* and would, in fact, be resented in various quarters; there would be less difficulty if all officers above the "Long Grade" were named in a single list of "Staff Posts," without any departmental tags. I have known departmental officers who, if this arrangement had been in existence, would certainly have risen to the highest posts in the Colonial Service; as it was, their administrative ability was overlooked on account of their professional and departmental qualifications.†

* Sir James Maxwell, for instance, was a Medical Officer before he transferred to the Administrative Service, and later became Governor of Northern Rhodesia. But he took a risk in transferring while a comparatively junior officer with his administrative ability still unproved; had he remained in the Medical Department until he had been promoted to a senior Medical post it is unlikely that he would ever have been transferred.

† I realise that this would result in some of their best men being taken from the Departments, which might affect the efficiency of those Departments, but this would be the lesser of two evils.

I have spoken in a previous chapter* of the difficulties caused by the private practice allowed to certain Medical Officers. The Departments staffed with members of another profession present a different kind of problem. Barristers are appointed to the Judicial Department as Magistrates and later as Judges, and to the Legal Department as Crown Counsels and later as Attorneys-General; the experience normally required is at least four years' practical experience in their profession. A number of appointments to these legal posts have, however, been made in the past of qualified barristers who have served for some years in the Administrative Service in the colonies; these no doubt lack practical experience at the Bar, but this, in my opinion, is compensated for by their local knowledge, and the knowledge that their superior officers have of them before they are selected. The other type, coming direct to the colonies to fill magisterial or legal posts, may or may not be a success; I have known some who were very good indeed, but more who were not. The man who joins the Colonial Legal Service after some years at the Bar in Great Britain or Ireland may have some personal reason for wishing to live in the colonies, or he may, through bad luck, have failed to make a good enough living at home; but there is at least a chance that he has failed to make a success of his profession in his own country through his own fault and that his legal knowledge is no greater, in fact, than that of the "briefless barrister" who comes from the Administrative Service. Putting professional qualifications aside, the man from the Administrative Service has served for a probationary period and would not have been transferred to a legal post unless his personal character and other qualifications had proved satisfactory. Nothing is known of the other man except what can be gathered from testimonials and personal interviews neither of which can give any real guarantee of suitability for a tropical life; but a magistrate or a legal officer in a colony holds a fairly senior position and it is difficult to remove one who is unsatisfactory.

The Colonial Office paper† referred to above sets out a scheme for the training of officers selected for the Colonial Service. This

* See p. 117.

† Colonial No. 197 (1946).

provides for a special course from October to June at Oxford or Cambridge for men appointed to the Administrative Service (and other courses for those appointed to the various Departments). Later, after the officer has served in the colony and been confirmed in his appointment, he will be required to attend a "summer school" at one of the universities, followed by a further six months' course in special subjects, and at a still later stage in his career an officer will be granted "study leave." This "sabbatical year" will afford him the opportunity of specialising in a particular subject or of travelling in other British or foreign colonies to widen his experience.

This is an extension of the training schemes which have been in existence for many years. In my youth officers of the Administrative Service (and some Departments) were required to take the Tropical African Services Course,* most of the lectures being given at the Imperial Institute in London ; in my opinion (and speaking from my own experience) this course was a complete waste of time, but it only lasted for a few weeks and as much of it was taken during the officer's leave it was at least not official time that was being wasted. At a later date this course was abolished, and instead of it officers were sent for a year to Oxford or Cambridge, before they took up their appointments, where they received a special training ; from what I have heard from some of those who experienced it, this arrangement was an even worse waste of time, although a very pleasant one. I feel sure that the officer would have derived more benefit from a year spent in learning his work *in the colony*. The really important subject that has to be studied is one of the languages of the colony in which the officer is to serve ; this obviously could be learnt better on the spot. My principal objection to these courses, however, is that they are too theoretical, and do not include training in the two essentials, unlimited patience and a real sympathy for the people among whom the young officer will work. There is a danger that the courses will produce a number of young men, full of zeal and theory, with more than the usual arrogance of youth, impatient of the slowness of Africans in responding to schemes devised for their benefit, and trying to reach perfection in a few weeks.

* The subjects were : Tropical Hygiene and Public Health ; Criminal Law, Evidence and Procedure ; Tropical Economic Products ; the Colonial System of Accounts ; Muslim Law ; International Law ; Surveying ; and Ethnology. In consequence of my previous colonial experience I was excused from some of these subjects.

Apart from the fact that the new courses will take longer, the new scheme differs little from the last, except for the proposals with respect to the "sabbatical year." I agree whole-heartedly that officers should visit other colonies, foreign as well as British, to broaden their minds, and to see how things are done in other places. This will stop a lot of the parochialism that is often found among those whose experience is limited to a single colony ; as Governor of the Gold Coast I had intended when sufficient staff was available (but it never was) to send officers on visits to neighbouring colonies. I do not believe, however, that these visits would be of use to all officers, and I hope that "study leave" will be given as a reward and encouragement to promising officers and not be regarded as a privilege to which all are entitled. I attach little value to the special course given before an officer proceeds to his colony ; he might derive some benefit from such a course if he had first served for a year or two in the colony, so that he could appreciate the kind of things which he needed to study. Nor do I consider that the further course to be taken after confirmation would be of benefit to all officers. A few selected men might benefit from this further course ; for the rest it will be a pleasant period of recreation in England. However, I hope that I am wrong in these opinions, and that the new courses will be of greater value than those taken by officers in the past.

There is one important point that must not be overlooked. Most of the cost of these courses will be paid by the colonies, and although it is stated in the Paper referred to that they "will gain in return for their money a better trained and more highly qualified public service" (which I doubt), the fact remains that officers will give fewer years to the Service as a result of the greater time devoted to courses. An officer may join the Service in tropical Africa at about the age of 22, but often he will join it at a later age ; he will be allowed to retire at the age of 45, but may quite possibly be invalided out of the Service when much younger. His service, therefore, will seldom be longer than 23 years and may be much shorter. Out of this period he will spend from two to three years on courses (as well as the time spent on leave) at the expense of the colonies. Will it be worth the money ?

Criticisms have been made in recent years of the organisation of the administrative machine in the colonies, not only by those outside, but also by some of those most intimately acquainted with its working. It is said that the Colonial Secretary, through whom all matters are referred to the Governor, is overworked, and that as a result his office becomes a "bottle-neck" in which public business is held up. Many suggestions have been made with a view to improving the position, and there have been experimental changes made by the creation of Administrative and Development Secretaries in order to relieve the Colonial Secretary of some of his work. While I agree that in some of the larger colonies the Colonial Secretary is overworked, I believe that the cause lies less in the amount of work with which the Secretariat has to deal than in the insufficient assistance which the Colonial Secretary receives from his staff.

In my view there is nothing inherently wrong with the existing organisation, although minor adjustments could be made with advantage. I consider it essential that there should be a single high official, Colonial Secretary or Chief Secretary, who should be the Governor's chief adviser, through whom all public business should pass. If this were not the case, the co-ordination of all the activities of government would depend on the Governor alone, and on his memory. Under the existing organisation there are two memories, those of the Governor and of the Colonial Secretary, which stand between a co-ordinated administration and utter chaos. It must be remembered that some Governors have no previous colonial experience, a handicap which seldom affects a Colonial Secretary. Again, the Colonial Secretary will have to administer the Government from time to time, and, if the suggested changes were made, he would be out of touch with much of the work when he was called upon to control the administration. The real trouble lies, as I have indicated above,* in the methods now adopted for staffing the Secretariat. The interchange of officers between the Secretariat and the District Administration has been carried to such lengths that very few Secretariat officers have received adequate training for their work. The result is that the Colonial Secretary does not receive the assistance he should receive from his staff, and has himself to

* See p. 50.

attend to a great deal of detail which should have been cleared up before he is asked to consider the subject at issue. It was not so in the past ; this is a fact and not merely that I am *laudator temporis acti*. In the Nigerian Secretariat, when I was a junior officer, my seniors were all men experienced in Secretariat work, and the "devilling" of the papers was so well supervised by them that the Chief Secretary of this large colony was able to deal effectively with the many papers that came before him. Later, when I performed the duties of Chief Secretary, my work was lightened in the same way by trained subordinates, trained, I may add, in that very Secretariat. The deterioration that has set in since those days in many Secretariats is due entirely, in my opinion, to excessive zeal in carrying out the policy of interchangeability of staff, a policy devised for the benefit of the officers without due consideration of its effect on the Service.

Anyone of reasonable education can come in to a Secretariat and write minutes, but minutes vary considerably in value. The minutes of some officers are not worth reading, and it is not difficult for the Colonial Secretary or the Governor to pick these out and avoid reading them. On the other hand, the good Secretariat officer is invaluable to his superiors, to the departments, and to the public, and it is he who could, or should, make it possible for the Colonial Secretary to be something more than a drudge. Now in my view this involves training, for a good Secretariat officer is made and not born, and an officer cannot be trained in a single year or even two years in a Secretariat. Moreover, a Secretariat "memory" is essential, and a memory which can only go back for a year or two is of little value.

I believe that what is needed is a reversal of the policy of interchangeability in its present extreme form, and that, if this is done, we shall hear less of the "bottle-neck" caused by the amount of work thrown on the Colonial Secretary. I do not suggest that this officer will not in any case have a great deal to do ; that is inevitable, but he could be relieved of some of his work without making any radical change in the organisation of his office.

In the first place he could be relieved of a great deal of the work connected with difficult "personnel" questions. Matters affecting individual public servants, and general questions of promotion,

salaries, allowances, etc., take up a disproportionate amount of the time of the Colonial Secretary (and of the Governor). There is no reason why many of these questions should not be dealt with by a responsible Director of Personnel, working with a Public Service Commission.* Such an arrangement would at one blow relieve the Colonial Secretary of a type of work on which he now spends too much of his time.

The Colonial Secretary should also be relieved of the chairmanship of the numerous committees on which, in most colonies, he is expected to serve. He should of course see (and initial) the minutes put up to the Governor by the Financial Secretary and his other principal assistants, but he could easily be saved much of the physical effort and waste of time involved in opening and initialling files submitted to the Governor in purely formal matters. To some extent reform could be effected by better organisation, but the essential reform needed is in the staff of the office.

The suggestion I have made above for the appointment of a Director of Personnel would, if adopted, allow more time for the Financial Secretary also to carry out the proper duties of his office. Until about 1937 the financial adviser to the Governor in a colony was the Treasurer, who was also responsible for the keeping of the Government accounts. This arrangement was then changed, responsibility for the accounts being entrusted to an Accountant-General, and the new post was created of Financial Secretary, an Officer of the Secretariat, who would be "fitted by training and experience to advise upon the whole financial and economic policy of the Government."† I do not believe that the objects sought in this change have been achieved. With one notable exception, the officers whom I have known as Financial Secretaries have not been particularly fitted by training or experience for the duties they were expected to perform. They were Administrative Officers without any special financial training, and most of them have longed to return to the work they knew and liked. The Financial Secretary has therefore tended to be little more than a "schedule" officer of the

* This has been recommended in the report of the *Commission on the Civil Services of British West Africa*, 1945-46.

† Miscellaneous No. 470 (2nd Edition).

Secretariat, dealing with financial matters, and much of his time has necessarily been taken up, in this connection, in dealing with matters of personnel. He has, as a rule, little claim to be regarded as a financial expert or a safe guide to the Government in economic policy. As the watch-dog over Government funds he tends to become narrow in his outlook, and to concentrate on details to the exclusion of the bigger things. I consider that the Financial Secretary should not normally be appointed from the Administrative Service, but should be a trained economist, with experience of matters connected with trade and industry ; the title might well be changed to that of Economic Adviser. In the first instance these men would probably have to be recruited from non-official sources, but it would be part of their duty to train their successors, who would fill, in the first place, junior positions in the office of the Economic Adviser.

In my opinion the time has also come to consider whether the Executive Council, as it now exists, should be retained. At one time the Executive Council in most colonies consisted only of senior officials, who were in any case the Governor's principal advisers ; later a few unofficial members were added to the Council. The official members almost invariably include the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General, the Financial Secretary, and the Director of Medical Services. The unofficial members are generally professional men, merchants, or land-owners.

While the Governor seeks the advice of Executive Council in all matters of any importance (and in some that are really unimportant) it is possible to classify generally the principal types of questions which come before the Council. These are (a) whether a capital sentence should be carried out or commuted ; (b) disciplinary cases against members of the Civil Service ; (c) social welfare matters, including education, and health questions ; (d) financial and economic questions ; and (e) approval of subsidiary legislation which is often merely formal.

It is obvious that a Council constituted on the lines indicated above cannot be the best to advise on all these different subjects, and a great deal of the time of these busy men is wasted on trivial matters outside of the cognizance of many of the members. To take the first type of cases, the Financial Secretary and the Director of Medical Services

are not qualified by their offices (although they may be personally qualified) to advise whether or not a condemned criminal should be executed. In disciplinary cases all these senior officials and unofficials may be called upon to decide whether a very junior clerk should be punished for an offence. The Attorney General is not likely to be qualified to advise on such matters as health and education, and he and the Director of Medical Services are seldom experienced in financial and economic affairs.

The Executive Councils are today as much out-of-date as are the Colonial Regulations.* Both have been tinkered with from time to time in attempts to modernise them, but results are not satisfactory. The Executive Council is unsuited to present conditions and to the needs of large colonies. It was originally designed as a check on the Governors of small colonies not in telegraphic touch with Downing Street, at a time when Governors with no colonial and probably little administrative experience were appointed, under a system of patronage which sometimes led to unfortunate results. My opinion is that the Executive Councils as constituted today should be abolished and their places taken in each colony by four separate statutory bodies :—

(a) A Privy Council to consist of the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General, and two other persons to be selected by the Governor to advise him on such questions as the commutation or confirmation of capital sentences and important matters of policy.

(b) A Public Service Commission consisting of the Director of Personnel, a legal officer, two representatives of the Civil Service, and two other persons nominated by the Governor to advise the Governor on all matters affecting the Civil Service, including appointments, promotions, and punishments.

(c) A Social Welfare Committee, consisting of the Governor or Colonial Secretary, the Heads of the Educational, Labour and Medical Departments, and a small number of other persons, some nominated by the Governor and others elected by the members of the Legislative Council, to advise on all matters affecting the social welfare of the people. If an important matter of policy were

* See p. 166.

involved, the advice of the Committee would be considered further by the Privy Council.

(d) An Economic Development Committee consisting of the Governor or Colonial Secretary, the Economic Adviser (or Financial Secretary), the Comptroller of Customs, and a small number of other persons, some nominated by the Governor and others elected by the members of the Legislative Council, to advise on all matters of trade, finance and economic development. Again, matters of policy would be further considered by the Privy Council.

I believe that the Government machine reorganised in this way would work more easily and would be able to secure the services, for the various purposes needed, of the most suitable members of the public. It would widen the scope of selection of unofficials and counteract the tendency to confine the Governor's advisers to members of a single class. It would also give to the Legislature the opportunity of electing members to the two important committees dealing with social welfare and economic development; such election would be undesirable in the case of the present Executive Council, which to a great extent must be a secret "Privy" Council.

It is very unfortunate that there should be such little interest taken in the colonies by people in the United Kingdom and the Dominions, and so little knowledge of their problems. Even among Members of Parliament, responsible in the last resort for these colonies, this lack of interest and knowledge is evident at any session of the House of Commons when colonial affairs are being discussed. The unfortunate result is that a few self-styled "experts" on colonial affairs, with but a superficial knowledge of the colonies themselves, are accepted as guides in matters of vital importance to millions of people. A few weeks' visit to a colony is considered to give a man (or woman) the right to pose as an authority, and perhaps to write a book on the subject. I once had to listen, with the politeness required of a host, to a lecture delivered by a visitor who had been less than 24 hours in the colony, but was quite sure that he knew how its problems could be solved. Such people often assume that the same results can be obtained by the same methods in different countries, and that conditions are the same throughout the world. Conditions are certainly not the same, but human nature varies very

little among different races and the people of the colonies resent, in the same way as people in London or New York would resent, the impertinent interference of busybodies. I have often wondered why the African, for example, does not retaliate on those who come out to "study" him, as though he were some strange animal or museum piece, by sending a commission to study and report on the peculiarities of Englishmen and Americans.

After a lifetime in the colonies I have learnt a little about the people who inhabit them. The most important thing I have learnt is that it is of no use trying to drive them, or to force reforms upon them. Gross abuses and barbarities must, of course, be stamped out as quickly as possible, but in other matters it is better to wait until the people come willingly along the road of reform, even if this involves the toleration of a certain amount of inefficiency, and a number of untidy loose ends. Very often local opposition is aroused to a proposed measure, not because the measure is in itself objectionable but because the people have not been consulted and no one has taken the trouble to explain the reasons for the proposed measure. Those reasons may be obvious to us but may not be so obvious to persons with a different background. Local traditions, local sentiment, local vanities, may be absurd from the point of view of the stranger, but they are less absurd in the eyes of the local people than the cock-sure methods of some individuals.

Very often, also, it is better to give way in a matter in which people feel strongly, even though the reasons they give may not be convincing. For years, in every colony in which I have served, the local legislature has protested against the colony being required to contribute to the maintenance, generally in England, of various institutions which do work for the colonies, such institutions, for example, as the Imperial Institute and the Schools of Tropical Medicine. Of the value of these institutions to the colonies there can be no question, but until the colonial legislatures are prepared willingly to contribute to them, I feel that the necessary funds should be provided from the amount available under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. I suggest also that if the cost of expatriation pay to "imported" officials were financed in the same way, instead of requiring the colonies to pay, a great deal of unnecessary friction

would be avoided ; the money set free in the colony by this arrangement would be available to pay for developments which would otherwise have been financed by grants under the Act. There would be no practical difference in the help given to the colonies, while the irritations caused by the expatriation principle would be less obvious.

Great changes are taking place in the tropical colonies. The people of these colonies have moved in a couple of generations from a primitive or medieval existence (or, in the case of the older colonies perhaps, from an Early Victorian civilisation) into a modern world. Many of them are intoxicated by the new wine that they are discovering in the old bottles, but there remains a solid core of reasonable and balanced men. It is our business to help these men, and to show them the constitutional way to political and economic independence. In the past we have made many mistakes in our colonial administration and we will probably make more in the future, but against our mistakes we can set a record of achievement which has not been excelled by any nation in the world, and on balance we have nothing to be ashamed of.

In a minute I addressed to the Civil Service soon after I assumed the government of the Gold Coast, I wrote as follows :

"There has recently been a tendency at home to decry our past colonial administration and to harp unduly on its failures, forgetting, in an orgy of self-depreciation, our very considerable achievements and the high standard of administrative integrity which even our critics cannot deny. I think there has been far too much sackcloth and ashes, and I hope that this unfortunate and entirely unjustified attitude has not depressed the men who are doing such good work in the colonies. There is no reason why it should. . . .

"I probably have had a longer experience of colonial service than any other European in the Gold Coast, and for this reason I know perhaps better than most how difficult it is always to be sympathetic, and patient, and courteous, under great provocation, and in spite of the often unreasonable criticism and suspicion which is the lot of every Civil Servant in the colonies. But this criticism and suspicion cannot be escaped, and we must rely on our sense of humour to save us from taking it too seriously. What is also necessary is a strong

faith in the justness of our policy. (I suggest, in this connection, that we should read from time to time *The Pro-Consuls*, by Kipling.)"

I still feel as I did then. I still feel that the Colonial Civil Service has done more for humanity and for the honour of our nation than it is given credit for, and I believe that it still has a great task before it,* and one that it will perform efficiently. I envy the young men who are just starting their service in the colonies, and I wish that I could continue to share with them the burden that they must carry.

* See Appendix C, p. 317, for remarks on this subject made by me in a speech at Oxford in September, 1947.

APPENDIX A

(See page 49)

MINUTE FROM THE GOVERNOR

TO COLONIAL SECRETARY,

I think I should lay down clearly, for the guidance of Secretariat Officers, the well-established Secretariat principles which have stood the test of experience, and should be followed in your office.

2. It is obviously impossible for the Governor (or, indeed, the Colonial Secretary) to see and deal with every file, and, in consequence, a considerable amount of discretion must be left to the Secretariat staff. But this discretion must be exercised with due regard to the known policy and wishes of the Governor, and with full consideration for the feelings of Heads of Departments and other officers outside the Secretariat. There is nothing so fatal to the successful administration of a Colony as a lack of confidence in or a feeling of hostility towards the Secretariat among Departmental Officers and the Administrative staff in the Districts.

3. The Secretariat must be the medium through which unpalatable decisions are conveyed to Heads of Departments and others. It is not pleasant for a responsible officer to have his recommendations turned down, especially when he has taken great pains to formulate a sound and constructive plan only to see it rejected or postponed for financial or other reasons. It is natural that this officer should think he is right, and the Governor, or whoever has given the decision against him, wrong, and as Governors and Secretariats are not infallible it is quite possible that the decision *may* be wrong. But even when the decision is the right one (as I hope it usually is) it must be a disappointment to the Head of Department or other officer who has put it forward.

4. In such circumstances it is essential that the Secretariat should sugar the pill by a carefully written and sympathetic letter. Courtesy in correspondence is *not* a sign of weakness. A bald negative should never be sent, and although the reason for a refusal may be obvious in the Secretariat (where all the facts and precedents are available) it may not be so obvious to others. Reasons for a refusal should therefore be fully explained.

5. While approval for proposals involving no new policy may be given by more junior officers, it should be clearly understood that no proposal by a Head of Department (and still more no proposal by a Chief Commissioner) should be replied to in the negative except by the Governor's express authority. (Proposals on which a parallel decision has been given by the Governor previously, or on which the Governor's policy has been clearly expressed, may be turned down by the Colonial Secretary, except when they come from Chief Commissioners.)

6. Letters containing even an implied rebuke to a Head of Department or other senior officer should never be sent without the Governor's express authority, and such letters must be signed by no one but the Colonial Secretary himself.

7. Letters turning down proposals by Chief Commissioners should invariably be signed by the Colonial Secretary who should also sign all letters turning down proposals by Heads of Departments, except in matters of detail in which case the letters may be signed by the Financial Secretary or the Under Secretary.

8. It is difficult to lay down a definite rule regarding the signing of ordinary letters "for the Colonial Secretary." Letters sent "for information" may, of course, be signed by any Assistant Colonial Secretary, but where letters contain an instruction they should as far as possible be signed by a senior officer. It may seem ridiculous that the signing by junior officers of letters conveying instructions should give offence especially as these officers sign "for the Colonial Secretary" and that the letters begin with "I am directed by the Governor"; but the fact remains that such things *do* cause resentment and therefore should be avoided.

9. Junior officers should also avoid making marginal comments of a critical nature on points in a letter from a Head of Department. Later on (when the point at issue may be forgotten), the file may be referred to the Head of Department concerned, or in one way or another sooner or later, he will get to hear of these criticisms, and he will resent them. This sort of thing breeds an anti-Secretariat complex.

10. An officer reading a letter or minute should do so, not with a view to showing his own cleverness by picking holes in it, but to see how he can help. He must, of course, observe and point out to his superiors any errors of fact or deduction but he should do so in the true Secretariat spirit, which should be the spirit of helpfulness and not of carping criticism or obstruction. The Secretariat should be the friend of the Departmental or District official, and if Secretariat officers adopt the right attitude it will be so regarded.

11. In this minute I have referred only to correspondence emanating from officials, but the same general principles should be observed in answering letters or petitions from non-officials. Wherever possible full reasons should be given why a request cannot be entertained, and in most cases it is desirable to say that "the Governor regrets he is unable to approve."

12. Finally, no officer need think that time is wasted on the drafting of a courteous reply to a letter. More often than is realised it is not so much the decision itself as the way in which it is conveyed that causes resentment or its converse.

13. Please circulate this minute for information and guidance, and arrange for new Assistant Colonial Secretaries to see it when they join the Secretariat.

ALAN BURNS

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
ACCRA, GOLD COAST,
27th July, 1944.

APPENDIX B

(See page 188)

Broadcast speech delivered by Sir Alan Burns, acting Governor of Nigeria, at Lagos, on the 30th May, 1942.

I AM very sorry indeed that I have to speak this evening to the people of Lagos on an unpleasant subject. I know Lagos well, as I first landed in Lagos thirty years ago. I know the people of Lagos well, and many of them are old friends. I know that the people of Lagos are loyal and that they have plenty of common sense. And it is for this reason that I am sorry, sorry that any of them should be contemplating acts of disloyalty.

The Government hopes to receive, within the next month, the report and recommendations of the Cost of Living Committee on which it can base the final award of the cost of living bonus. In the meantime, because I was told that the people were suffering from the delay that has occurred in completing the Cost of Living Report, I decided to grant an *interim* bonus, together with arrears of bonus from October last, until such time as the final award could be made. But certain Government employees, and others, have refused to accept this interim bonus because they say that it is not large enough and have refused to accept the arrears which have been offered to them. If these people can refuse money in this way it makes me wonder whether they were suffering as much as I was told.

Not only have they refused the Government's offer but I understand that they contemplate leaving work on Monday, and marching in a procession as a demonstration. Now I want to warn you all, and I warn you as a friend, that it is against the law for persons employed in work necessary on account of the war to go on strike. And processions are forbidden without the permission of the Police. And if you strike, or if you join in an illegal procession, you will be breaking the law, and will place yourselves in danger of prosecution.

Now it is my duty to see that the law is not broken, and it is my duty to see that work essential to the war is not held up. I must do my duty, as I have always tried to do it, without fear or favour, and my long-standing friendship for the people of Lagos is not going to make me fail in my duty. Those who break the law will be punished and Government will not hesitate to take all steps necessary to see that work proceeds.

I have spoken about my own duty, but what about *your* duty? The Lagos people have a reputation for loyalty, and time and again since this war began they have affirmed their desire to do everything possible to help in crushing Hitler. Are you going now to help Hitler by stopping work? Are you going to give people outside of Nigeria, who do not know you as I know you, the opportunity to say that all your promises of help, all your protestations of loyalty, were just lies? Are you going to give Hitler the satisfaction of knowing that the people of

Lagos are doing what they can to prevent the allies from winning the war? I shall be very disappointed if you do.

There is another question I want to ask you. Are you going to be so unwise as to refuse to accept the bonus, and the arrears that the Government is offering you, because some of your advisers, who perhaps do not need the money as much as you do, think they will get more by refusing? Some of you, I am glad to say, have accepted the bonus and arrears, and others, I know, are going to do so. They are intelligent enough to know that this will not interfere with the amount of the final award. If your advisers tell you that by striking you will get a larger interim bonus they are not telling you the truth. Government has decided on the amount of this interim bonus *and is not going to change that decision.*

Do you all understand what is meant by an interim bonus? Do you realise that it is given merely as a temporary measure, until the final award, which will be based on the report of the Cost of Living Committee, can be made? If you receive 12s. 6d. or 15s. a month now as an interim bonus, with arrears at that rate, and the Report of the Cost of Living Committee shows that you should receive more, then you will receive the extra money and the correct amount of arrears. In the meantime, and it cannot be very long, you have the first 12s. 6d. or 15s. a month and the arrears from last October which you can use to meet your present expenses. The payment of this interim bonus now will not affect the amount of the final rate of bonus which will ultimately be paid. Do not believe people who tell you otherwise.

To the two telegrams sent by the Nigeria Civil Service Union, the Association of Railway Civil Servants, the African Civil Servants Technical Workers' Unions, and the P.W.D. Workers' Union, the Secretary of State, Lord Cranborne, has replied to the effect that he has received the messages and that he sympathises with the hardships which African Civil Servants, in common with all others of the King's subjects, are experiencing in consequence of the rise in the cost of living. He goes on to say that the final award must obviously await the recommendation of the Cost of Living Committee, whose report is expected very shortly, and he desires to emphasise firstly the assurance previously given that acceptance of the interim grant will in no way prejudice the final award, and secondly that the interim grant, including as it does back payment with effect from last October, must surely, by relieving immediate distress, remove all reasonable cause for further increase pending consideration of the Committee's report. This should be the view of all reasonable men.

If any of you is trading you would not pay out your money until you knew what you were going to get for it, but you might be prepared to make an advance first and pay the balance when you were satisfied with your purchase. I am in the same position. I am not going to make the final payment until I know, from the report of the Cost of Living Committee, what I ought to pay in wages, but I am ready to make an advance, which is the interim bonus. Lagos people are good traders, and they should know whether this is good business. I am responsible for Government money. It is not my money, or money that has been created out of

nothing. It is money obtained by the taxation of all the people of Nigeria ; it is your money ; and it is my responsibility to see that it is wisely spent.

I am making this appeal to your loyalty and good sense for the sake of old friendship. I ask you to give up any idea of striking or of demonstrations. I ask you to accept the interim bonus without prejudice to the final award. I ask you to believe that this Government is doing, and will do, all that it can to give its employees a fair wage, and to keep down the cost of living.

And I ask you most earnestly to preserve your long-established reputation for loyalty and respect for the law. Do not be led astray into conflict with the Government, which is bound to take all the steps necessary, and *will* take all the steps necessary, to see that essential work is carried on, and to maintain order.

I hope that the people of Lagos are not going to disappoint me.

APPENDIX C

THE FUTURE OF THE COLONIAL SERVICE

(See page 312)

A speech delivered by Sir Alan Burns, G.C.M.G., Governor of the Gold Coast, at the Oxford Second Course Summer School on 9th September, 1947.

I HAVE been asked to speak to you this morning of the future of the Colonial Civil Service as I think it must develop if it is to meet the growing demands that will be made on it during the next twenty or thirty years. I shall not attempt to make any detailed suggestions on this subject but shall confine myself to the most important question of all—our relations with the peoples of the colonies on which everything else depends. Before, however, I take on the functions of a minor prophet (not, be it understood, of my own choice), I wish to look backwards for a few minutes to the past of the Service—a past which in my case covers an official lifetime of forty-two years.

In the first place I wish to emphasise that the Colonial Civil Service has little to be ashamed of in its past. Without being unduly complacent, and fully conscious of our many mistakes, I feel that we have done a great job, very often in difficult circumstances, and not seldom in spite of the discouragements we have met from those who should have known better. There has been in recent years a tendency in some quarters to decry our past colonial administration, and to harp unduly on its failures, forgetting, in an orgy of self-depreciation, our very considerable achievements, and the high standard of administrative and judicial integrity which even our critics cannot deny. I think there has been far too much sackcloth and ashes, and I think it has done a great deal of harm. It has given a false idea to our friends of what we have done, and what we are doing, and has provided a handle for our enemies which they can use to attack our so-called Imperialism. It has unduly depressed a number of men in the Colonial Service who have been led to

think by these constant apologies that they have perhaps failed in the work to which they have put their hand. But worst of all, in my opinion, is the effect it has had on the people in the Colonies who are only too prone to blame everyone else for their present condition, and to overlook their own failure to take advantage of the chances that have been given them. Let us freely admit that our Colonial Administration has not been perfect, but do not let us for one moment give the impression that we think we have done badly, because I believe we have done very well indeed, and I doubt whether any other nation could have done better.

There have even been suggestions that our Empire is coming to its end, that our Colonies are now ready and anxious to stand by themselves, and there will shortly be no further need for a Colonial Civil Service. I don't believe it. Colonial peoples criticise their governments, but that does not mean that they want any other nation to govern them, or that they think they can yet govern themselves. Only the other day a Gold Coast paper stated (and no one challenged that statement) that that Colony was not yet fit for self-government, and the Gold Coast is far nearer to fitness for self-government than many others. There are, of course, some people in every Colony who would like to see a revolutionary change, but I do not believe that the average Colonial's criticism of Colonial government is anything more serious than the natural desire for improvement. Our Colonial Administration is not perfect. It is run by men and not by archangels, and being human they make mistakes. There is no perfect government anywhere in the world, and there are even Socialists in England today who are dissatisfied with the Socialist Utopia in which we are now living, but would do nothing to throw out the Government.

Believe me, the Colonial Civil Service, with all its imperfections, will be needed for many years to come.

Let me remind you that before the war, if we exclude such fortresses as Gibraltar and Malta, there were practically no white troops in the British Colonies, to hold down, as some people think we hold down, the subject populations. Again in 1940, when we of the British Empire stood alone against the Axis, with our allies overwhelmed by the Germans, and our own armies defeated, when our enemies exulted over our impending ruin, and even our friends had abandoned hope, this was the time when our Colonies stood by us—friends indeed, and true loyal friends.

In the Gold Coast at that time we had few troops and we were surrounded by hostile Vichy territory. Had the people of the Gold Coast wished to push us into the sea there was little to prevent them. But this was the time when the people came forward in their thousands, not with empty protestations of loyalty, but with men to serve in the army (and you know how gallantly the Gold Coast Regiment served in Abyssinia and Burma) and in the Home Guard, and with liberal gifts to war funds and war charities. This was curious conduct for people tired of British rule. And the Gold Coast was one of many Colonies which acted in this curious way.

I am going to speak of the Colonies in a general way, but I fear it is inevitable that I may refer to Africans as though they were the only people to live in the

Colonies. As most of my recent service has been in Africa the word comes naturally to me, and I trust that you who serve in other Colonies will understand and forgive.

In its early stages Colonial Administration is a comparatively simple matter. It consists merely of maintaining order, of opening up the country by means of roads and railways, and of giving justice to the people. Colonial Civil Servants in the early days needed physical courage and the ability to live amid great discomfort, the ability also to do any kind of odd job that came along. Above all it was necessary for them to possess a real sympathy for the people among whom they were working. Now that the Colonies are under effective control physical courage is perhaps no longer necessary (but there is still a need for that moral courage which is wanted in every walk of life). Nor is there any need today for the Administrative Officer to be the Jack of all trades that he was in the past, as we have now a number of professional men and technicians of every kind to do the more technical jobs. But there remains of the three things which were needed in the old Service the most important of all—a real sympathy for the people among whom we work. This has always been necessary, and *will* always be necessary however we may develop the Colonies, and however highly and efficiently our Administration may be developed.

When I speak of sympathy I am not suggesting for one moment that we should be sentimental in our treatment of the African. We must be able to see his faults as they exist, for it is a great mistake to regard him always as a “blameless Ethiopian.” The African, like ourselves, has lots of faults, but we must help him to overcome them, and we must help him by advice and example, and above all by impressing upon him that we really are his friends and *anxious* to help him. Nor must we be in too much of a hurry to “improve” him, and make him into what we think he ought to be. I am no believer in rapid change, and when we remember that the African has moved in a couple of generations from the equivalent of the Middle Ages to the so-called civilisation of the Twentieth Century, it will help us to realise that he has perhaps gone as fast as can be expected on the road of progress.

The rapid changes that some people would like to make, good in themselves as they may be, present sometimes a real difficulty to the social organisation of a primitive community. Let me give you an example.

A little while ago in the Gold Coast we proposed to bring water by a pipe-line from a river some three miles away to a certain village. Every day in the past the women of that village had had to walk those three miles out and three miles back, twice a day, to get their household water, and in our innocence we thought that the people would appreciate the saving of labour that would be involved by the provision of a pipe-line supply. But the old Chief of the village took a very poor view of this great social improvement, and when asked what the trouble was reluctantly explained that if the women were not so employed every day in fetching water only God knew what mischief they would get into.

Then again, every zealous Officer is seeking for efficiency, and such an Officer

may try to force the Africans to be efficient, and if they will not work efficiently will try to do the work himself. This may have satisfactory results from the point of view of the European Officer, but it will not teach the African anything, and it is better to teach them than to do the work oneself. Let the African make his own mistakes, as it is only by making these mistakes that he will learn to avoid them. You yourselves will find it more useful, and more satisfactory, to make your own mistakes, than to make the mistakes imposed on you from Headquarters. I have myself found it far more satisfactory as a Governor to make my own mistakes than to make the mistakes which the Colonial Office has suggested to me.

Then again don't let us be too sure that we are always right. The local knowledge of the primitive native has its value, and very often he knows a thing to be so, although he could not explain the reason for it. It sometimes gives us a jolt—and a very salutary jolt—when we get the local man's opinion of our bright ideas and of our efficiency. I once opened in British Honduras, with a great flourish of trumpets, a new rice mill of which I was very proud, and I invited the Maya Chiefs of the locality to come and admire this wonderful development. Seeing that one of them did not appear to be impressed I pointed out to him the merits of the mill, and showed him the clean rice emerging at the far end of it. His only comment was that the women of his tribe could do this with a stick.

Now it is clearly better to use the machinery of a rice mill than to use a stick, but he considered that we were making a lot of unnecessary fuss over a very simple thing and he was right. We would have done better if we had taken less trouble over the machinery, and more trouble over explaining its uses to the people. And we made that mistake because we did not know enough about the Mayas.

It is, in fact, our first job to learn all we can about the people of the Colonies, to learn their language if possible, and to learn what we can *from* them, including good manners. Above all, do not let us go out to the Colonies crammed with theories and try to make the facts fit into these theories. I speak now with diffidence, but there are perhaps far too many experts today with theories about Colonial Administration, only too ready and willing, from their vast theoretical knowledge, to suggest improvements in the way Colonial peoples should be governed. Sometimes they seem to forget that they are not dealing with abstract principles, but with human beings, and there is a real danger today of some confusion between the means and the end. There is some danger that the Colonies may come to be regarded merely as laboratories in which can be proved some of the magnificent theories evolved by experts. It is no use eliminating the mosquito in the colonies, if into the vacuum thus caused there comes a rush of experts.

Let me quote to you what Mr. J. S. Furnivall has to say about experts, in his contribution to *Fabian Colonial Essays* :

"The expert," he says, "is a specialist in his own subject, but not in native life. He tries to adapt native life to scientific principles; welfare requires the adaptation of scientific principles to native life . . . The expert does not see life whole, nor does he see it steadily."

May I add to this that the expert in this country is too far away to see life in the Colonies at all, especially when the distant view is obscured by the clouds of theory. Do not misunderstand me. The expert has his uses, provided that he is not regarded as a dictator, and provided that he does not annoy the people of the Colonies with his theories. There is, as I have said, some danger of confusion between the means and the end. There is even a danger in Courses such as this one, lest the Course be regarded as more important than the Colonies for whose benefit it is devised. And worst of all would it be if anyone began to think that the Colonies existed for the benefit of the Colonial Civil Service.

I do not think I am exaggerating the danger of these things, or of the tendency to think of what ought to be rather than of what actually is ; or of the danger of looking at Colonial problems through European eyes, and to expect the people of a Colony to think in the same way as we do, and to have the same reactions as we would have to Government interference.

The main thing in my opinion is to find out first what Colonial peoples want, and if their wants are not too unreasonable to let them have their way. I do not mean by this that we must give way to irresponsible clamour, or to the half-baked proposals of amateur politicians who seldom take the trouble to think out their problems, but where there is a consensus of opinion among reasonable local men (and there are many who could be so described) we should not dismiss their suggestions except for the gravest reasons, and if we do dismiss them we must carefully explain our reasons, with patience and with courtesy. The time is long past when we can get away with the attitude that "Daddy knows best" ; and we must remember that children are perverse enough to grow up. We are there in the Colonies to help and to educate, and we can only help by a thorough understanding of the Colonial point of view so far as it is possible for us to understand it. But we certainly will never understand unless we take the trouble to *try* to understand, and we will never get our own motives understood and appreciated unless we make the people believe that we are their friends and that we wish to help them.

Let me refer for a moment to indirect rule. This was an expedient adopted by my old chief, Lord Lugard, in Northern Nigeria, to meet the situation which then existed. He had not a sufficiently large European staff with which to govern the country, and he made use of the existing Native Administrations and governed Northern Nigeria through them. Since that time there have been some who have tried to turn the theory of indirect rule into a mystic religion, and by doing so have made it ridiculous. There is no mystery about indirect rule. It is merely a convenient form in the Colonies of local administration, and the Native Authorities are, or should be, what we in this country call Local Authorities. For those people who are still living a tribal existence I regard indirect rule as the best training in self-government, and we should support it wherever it is possible to do so. But it must really be indirect rule and made more democratic than it is in some places. We must not merely set up autocratic chiefs through whom we can govern, because such rule is just as direct as any rule that a District Officer could administer—and probably less efficient. I am not suggesting that we should take away the

power of the Chiefs and give it to men of our own choice. This would be fatal. So long as their own people trust the Chiefs and are willing to be governed by them we should support the Chiefs and help them to work efficiently without regard to the clamour from a certain class of politician, who would like, to satisfy his own ambitions, to replace the Chief as the recognised leader of the people. We must in any case be careful not to move so far ahead of public opinion as to confuse the people, and many of the people would be greatly confused if they lost their Chiefs. But when there is a real demand from the people for greater democracy we should encourage it and persuade the Chiefs to accept the position, and particularly to bring into their Councils more educated men. Let me add that many of the Chiefs realise the need for such a change and are already giving effect to it. In this, as in other matters, let the people decide, and let them if necessary make their own mistakes.

As I have said, I think indirect rule an excellent school in which the difficult art of self-government may be learnt. But indirect rule cannot be applied to all. It cannot be applied, for instance, to those educated people who have become divorced from their tribal life, and have adopted, perhaps with the Christian religion, a form of civilisation which is very much like ours. You cannot set the clock back in Africa or anywhere else, and you cannot expect the educated African to be satisfied with a Native Administration run by men in whom he has no confidence—illiterate men whom in his heart he despises.

One of the troubles has been that these educated Africans are less amenable to our suggestions, less friendly, and less willing to accept us as supermen, and it is not so pleasing to our vanity to be criticised (and perhaps abused) by educated politicians as it is to be treated with courtesy and respect by the members of a primitive community. But I have known a great many Africans, educated Africans, who were very pleasant and intelligent people, with better manners than many Europeans, and ready to co-operate with any of us whom they regarded as their friends. There are, of course, good and bad Africans, as there are good and bad Europeans. But do not be put off because you are criticised or opposed by Colonial politicians or by the Colonial Press. What you must do in such cases is to grin and bear it, and try by your own good manners to shame the others into better behaviour. I have never known such treatment to fail. No man in a responsible position can hope to escape criticism, and sometimes this criticism can be very unfair. But if you are confident in your heart that you have done the right thing, you can afford to ignore such criticism, which can do you no real harm.

Perhaps you will ask me what all this has to do with the future of the Colonial Service. In my view it has everything to do with it. The time has gone when the Colonial Civil Servant could afford to ignore the point of view of Colonial peoples, and indeed of world opinion. In the past we have worked conscientiously, and I think successfully, for the people of the Colonies, but now we must work *with* them. In the past we could maintain order, stamp out slave dealing and human sacrifice, and give justice in our courts. We needed no help in distinguishing between right and wrong in such cases, and there were in any case few people in the Colonies

of which I am now thinking who were in a position to advise or criticise our actions. Today the position is different. We have to take a far greater interest in the social and economic life of the people, and in these things we must have their co-operation and assistance. We must help them to improve themselves, help them to become more healthy and more wealthy and more wise, and above all we must help them to help themselves. Our function in the future will become increasingly different from what it was in the past.

Our role must in fact change from an executive to an advisory one, and with the acceleration of Africanisation in the Services of the African Colonies, there will be little room for the official who does not regard the training of African staff as his primary responsibility.

Nor must this training be confined to the Civil Service alone. It is our duty to educate the whole population, and this duty is by no means confined to the members of the Education Department. Education is not given only in schools and colleges. The mass of the people must be taught new and healthier ways of living, improved methods of agriculture and other work, and a greater sense of public responsibility. A fundamental characteristic of British Colonial policy is that we do not try to assimilate the Colonial peoples, nor to turn them into imitation Scotsmen—or even Englishmen—but to help them to develop a higher civilisation of their own, soundly based on their own traditional institutions and culture.

The maintenance and development of sound administration in a Colony depends almost entirely on the personal relationship that exists between the officials and the people of the country. The Colonial, like anyone else, is naturally reluctant to admit his shortcomings to unsympathetic persons, but he knows quite well in his own mind that he has much to learn, and he is anxious to learn whatever he can. Like ourselves, while he is willing to be led by a friend, he will not be driven by anybody, and least of all by one whom he does not trust, or who speaks to him in a condescending manner. He is very sensitive and the bad manners, or even the unsympathetic attitude, of one official may be sufficient to undo a great deal of good work done by a number of others. Every Government Officer should bear this constantly in mind. Each has a special and personal responsibility in this matter.

The first thing then that the Colonial Civil Servant has to do is to make friends with the people among whom he is to work, and if he makes friends with them, and gets them to trust him he will have laid the foundation of his life's work, and will find his duties far more pleasing and his work far more effective than otherwise. Our attitude in the future must be one of sympathetic tolerance and unlimited patience. We are there to teach and to help, not to govern by the strong hand. The task is going to get harder and harder each day, but it will become more and more worth while as we see the results of what we are doing. Our main job is to teach the Africans and other Colonials to take our places in the administration of the Colonies. We must try and teach them to do the work that we are doing ourselves, in order that they may replace us. It will be a long time before they

are as efficient as we are, because most of them have not got the background of training that we have had over many generations, and we must accept that fact. We must accept a certain amount of inefficiency, a certain amount of criticism even from those we are trying to help, and we must accept cheerfully the fact that we are training the men who in the end must take our places from us. You will get little thanks, but does this really matter ?

We must co-operate with the people of the Colonies and we must co-operate with one another. There can be no division of the Colonial Service into watertight compartments, with the Administrative Officers working separately from the technical men, and the technical men ignoring political repercussions in their professional zeal. As I see the Colonial Service in the future it must consist in each area of a team of men, professional and administrative, working together in close collaboration with one another, meeting frequently in committees, not committees in which there is much talk and little action, but businesslike active bodies of men, realising that they share a common responsibility for getting things done and a common duty to the people of the country. And above all, these Committees must work with the local people, with the local Chiefs and Native Authorities, and get their advice and help.

There is a great deal to be done and you gentlemen are representatives of the men who must do it. But you can only accomplish what you set out to do if you take the people into your confidence, work with them, play with them, and help them to the better life which they should share with us.

Above all, you must have a strong faith in the justness of our policy and confidence in our mission. You belong to a great Service and a Service with great traditions, and I am confident that the Service of the future will maintain those traditions worthily.

Remember above all that you belong to a Service and think sometimes when things are not going too well with you of Kipling's lines in *The Pro-Consuls* :

“For, so the Ark be borne to Zion, who
Heeds how they perished or were paid who bore it ?
For, so the Shrine abide, what shame—what pride
If we, the priests, were bound or crowned before it.”

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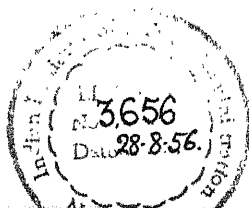
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